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Second Session, 41st Parliament

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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 16 November 2016

Mercredi 16 novembre 2016



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 16 November 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 16 novembre 2016

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ELECTION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES ÉLECTIONS

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 3, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 45, An Act to amend certain Acts with respect to provincial elections / Projet de loi 45, Loi visant à modifier certaines lois en ce qui concerne les élections provinciales.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Good morning to my colleagues in the House. It's great to see everyone bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, of course.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It seems like we were here not that long ago.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Not that long ago. It seems like just yesterday, in fact, Minister.

It is always good to be in this place on behalf of my riding of Essex and to speak to this bill this morning, Bill 45, the Election Statute Law Amendment Act.

This morning, as I was reviewing some of the notes on the act, I got a little bit excited because it—

Interjection: A little bit?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I did. It reminded me of the elections that we all run in to garner support to get here, and how wonderful they are as an expression of democracy in our communities.

Speaker, I don't know if you know, but I've run in five elections—three federal and two provincial elections—in the span of roughly 10 years. It takes some politicians a lifetime to run in five elections; I've done it in the span of 10 years. I garnered a lot of experience and I wouldn't trade it for the world. You get the chance to meet your community. You get the chance to talk about issues that are important to your community and work with people who are just as passionate as you are in the democratic process regardless of their partisan affiliations.

I've made lifelong friends through the elections that I've run in, from people that I know don't support me; I

know they're on the other side of the political spectrum. Yet being a candidate and being able to run in election campaigns is a real honour and a privilege that I don't take for granted. I don't think anyone else in the chamber does. That's why it's so important for us to be continuously reviewing the way that we run our elections in the province, and this is what Bill 45 does.

As an overview of the bill, there's nothing in here that I see that is too contentious. These are mostly recommendations that have come out of the Chief Electoral Officer and of the office's reports to legislators here.

The stated goal of this bill is to increase representation to First Nations communities in the Far North and promote inclusion and an elevated level of participation in our elections. That's always a good thing. When we can encourage people to participate in the process, we should be doing that. A few of these, I think, will have some tangible effect.

However, I'll say for the benefit of the government, the Ontario New Democratic caucus will be supporting this bill definitely at second reading. Now, we will be looking for a couple of amendments; one of them I would like to highlight. I would love and I hope that in the seven minutes that I have left—and whoever's on the other side, if you're going to respond to me, I'm going to ask a very clear question.

We've reviewed the part of the bill that recommends the far north boundaries commission. We'd like to see it expanded. If you've been in the House for any of the debates on this bill prior to today, you will have heard our member from Nickel Belt talk about Wahnapitae First Nation and the boundaries of that riding. Quite simply, that community has to cross France's riding of Nickel Belt to get to the riding of Timiskaming-Cochrane—a five-hour drive—to touch base with their elected representative, who is John Vanthof. John is happy to service that community and will continue to do it. But it's a glaring mistake in terms of the boundary redistribution, and it should be corrected. First Nations want it corrected. They want to be able to have the convenience of accessing services through France's office in Nickel Belt, within that riding. It just makes sense logically. It's really clear. We would really like this to happen.

I would like to know if that is something that the government is willing to do, and if not, I would like to know why. I've only heard one rationale as to why. It's the old excuse: "If we do it for them, we're going to have to do it for everyone." You're not, because no one else is requesting it in the province of Ontario. No other First Nation is requesting any consideration of redistribution

within the electoral boundaries. Even if they did, isn't it their right to question it, anyway? Who are we to say, "No, sorry, it's too much of a burden to enfranchise you"? That doesn't make any sense. So we would ask that the government really take a look at what the member from Nickel Belt, the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane and the community of Wahnapitae have requested because, again, as stated by the Chief Electoral Officer, the goal is to increase representation to First Nations communities.

The other part of this bill has to deal with two other ridings—the ridings of our two other colleagues: the member from Kenora—Rainy River and the member from Timmins—James Bay. Those ridings are enormous. I've been up there, but I've certainly never traversed the entirety of the ridings. I hear it would take you half a day, on a good day, if the roads are clear. And sometimes it takes you, in a small plane, a single-engine plane—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Two days.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Two days. These are the size of—give me some quotes here. How big are these ridings? Kenora is the size of Great Britain?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: France.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: France?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Throw in Belgium.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Okay. So they're enormous and we all know that.

It's beautiful country. If you ever get a chance to visit northern Ontario, get up there. It is some of the most beautiful, rugged country on the planet.

It makes a little bit of sense to take a look at how that area is represented, given that it's so vast and so difficult for members to access those remote communities. Again, I would be hopeful that the government would take in full consideration and consultation with not only the communities in that riding, but the members who currently service those two ridings, and do what's best for the people in the community.

There are a couple of other cool things in this bill that we can certainly get behind. One of them is the vote-counting machines. That's a little bit of a step towards advancing technology in our electoral system. These are vote-counting machines. These aren't electric online voting. Let's make that differentiation right now. I would hope that these machines have been tested, that they're certified and that they will perform the job. We've seen incidents like the hanging chads in Florida in the US presidential election of years past, where those machines definitely didn't count the vote properly and changed the course of that election. So we want to make sure that those machines are good and service our needs properly.

0910

The other thing that I think might be beneficial is the voluntary registry for youth, for 16- and 17-year-olds. We would hope that a lot of information goes out prior to that. One of the things that I've heard, actually—and maybe this is another question for the government, anyone who's going to respond—is that the government is considering taking out civics as a course curriculum.

Interjection: No.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: No? Okay. Tell me that's not the case.

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: The minister said no.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The minister said no. Perfect. That's great. I think, if anything, civics in our grade schools and high schools should be enhanced. We need more civics because politics and government affect our lives each and every day, in every way, so to cut that back would be a tragedy. But most definitely, if we can engage youth in the process, that's something good. Let's make sure, again, that the mechanisms for the registry are accountable, that they're transparent and that they could never be used for any nefarious reasons or for gaining political advantage. That would always be the hesitation, but I would suspect that we would be able to have enough of an oversight on that so we could protect it.

Therefore, Speaker, I'll end my 10 minutes and thank the members for their attention. We support the bill, but we're looking for the Wahnapitae First Nation—I'll say it again; it's been said a hundred times: We want to see that boundary be effectively changed so that they can be represented by the riding that's closest to them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to respond to the member from Essex. I'm pleased, of course, to hear that they're going to support the bill and that no, we aren't taking civics out. In actual fact, I think the registration of 16- and 17-year-olds in the electoral process should add to civics in terms of engaging youth. It is true: We need to do a better job of getting people more interested and participatory in our elections. I think 52% was the turnout in the last election. We can see the results of poor voter turnout in elections, which often ends up in results that people aren't satisfied with, but if you don't participate, it's pretty hard to be dissatisfied with the outcome of the process.

I also do want to say that I hear what the member has to say with regard to electoral boundaries. I don't understand them enough to have looked at a map, but that's been very clearly expressed by the member from Nickel Belt, yourself and the member from Timiskaming. And I'm sure that the ministers have heard that. I do want to say, and this is not a reason—as you were saying, we can do it for you; we've got to do it for everybody, which is a reason that I think actually, in any endeavour, is not a good answer. In my community, for instance, I have a very large Arabic population, so I have Arabic staff members. I serve people from across—I don't have boundaries. I don't see it that way. I say, "Did you speak to your member?" but—and I'm sure you do as well too, and I know that the member from Nickel Belt serves those people. I think sometimes we talk about the boundaries. I don't see myself as having boundaries where I am. I talk to people from Peterborough sometimes because of an issue that's there.

Hon. David Zimmer: Peterborough?

Mr. John Fraser: Yes, from Peterborough, and—thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm always proud to rise on behalf of my constituents of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. We're bringing voting into the 21st century, finally, with this government. I looked at some of the issues and what's worrisome is the electronic counting, because any IT project that we've seen this government touch has ended up really being a disaster. Just two weeks ago, the first attempt at the high school testing ended up in complete disaster, and of course their answer was easy: They blamed an outside source for hacking the system. But, you know, isn't that what this is all about: your electronic systems being a security wall so these things don't happen? Can we expect the same thing to happen during an election, where the system is hacked or it just doesn't work?

Whether it be SAMS or any of the other systems, I don't think they've had an IT system work seamlessly since, certainly, I've been here or since they've been in power. So it's worrisome that they would set something up for an election of the scale of Ontario.

So we're looking forward to seeing some of these changes. We're cautious on that issue as well as others. There are some controversial issues in the bill. Just the issue we hear about the civics—a lot of questions with this. I know we heard a verbal no, but we've heard that before, just as with Bill 2, the counterpart, where we're looking at some changes and amendments that we're waiting to see submitted on that bill. It just goes to show that sometimes what you see in a bill is not what you get. We're hoping that it's different this time—likely not. But we look forward to seeing more in this bill, and we look forward to talking at length.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Once again, it's always a pleasure to stand on behalf of the good people of Algoma–Manitoulin, following my colleague from Essex, who really brought the essence of, "Yeah, we're going to be supporting this bill." We're going to be making some definite recommendations and amendments to it once it gets to the committee stage, but one of the things that we're really trying to push this government to understand is to look at expanding the mandate of the commission so that we could look at a community like the First Nations community of Wahnapitae First Nation, who have for years been asking for an adjustment to the boundaries so that they can find themselves within Nickel Belt instead of Timiskaming–Cochrane, not because of the lack of service—because the two members from Timiskaming–Cochrane and Nickel Belt have been doing a fabulous job servicing that community—but it would just make sense that they would find their true home within that community.

The member from Essex also talked a little bit about the establishment of a voluntary registry and eligibility list for 16- and 17-year-olds. At first I thought, "Huh, what an idea." But then I thought that, well, this is

exactly what I'm trying to do as an MPP: really reaching out to those younger voices, and not just reaching out to them to listen to them but to actually act upon what they're asking for. I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that I have been successful in my riding of Algoma–Manitoulin in reaching out to those young, bright minds. A lot of them are going to be part of my riding association. They're going to be sitting in actual positions, trying to guide the entire area as far as where the next policies from our area are going to come from. So I thought that was a good idea. It prepares them and it gives them that opportunity to say: "Hey, I'm involved; I matter; I count. I'm ready, and when I turn 18, I know who I'll be voting for or I know where my thoughts are going to be, where I'll be able to identify myself and where I'm going to find the values that I want to see and bring those changes to government."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation.

Hon. David Zimmer: In my two minutes, I just want to outline again so that everyone in the public knows just exactly what the electoral commission is going to do. First of all—and this is very important, because there's a lot of interest in how these boundary lines are going to be drafted and so forth—the commission is required by the legislation to hold public hearings both before it prepares its report, then it will issue its report, and then it will hold another series of public hearings so people can respond to that preliminary report.

The second important thing that the commission will do is that the commission will hear from experts, academics and, yes, politicians. But most importantly, the commission is going to hear from the people who actually live in the ridings that may or may not be subject to change.

The third very important role of the commission is that the commission will look at the geography covered by the ridings specifically of Kenora–Rainy River and Timmins–James Bay, and the commission will make recommendations to create one of two things: either an additional riding—one or two ridings in that geographic space—and then, within three months of the appointments, the commission will have to submit a report with its recommendations back to the Attorney General.

0920

The point that I'm trying to make and that I have made here is that there is going to be a full consultation with the public residents in those ridings, with electoral experts and, yes, with politicians and academics. We want the best possible answers put to the commission.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Essex, two minutes.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate the Minister for—I've got to read that—Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation. I will commit that to memory, Minister, so I don't have to look at it again.

I appreciate the explanation on how the process will unfold, and we don't disagree with that. I think that's a legitimate process. The question that we have is around

the boundaries involving the riding of Nickel Belt and the Wahnapitae First Nation. How can you remedy that? How are you going to be able to do that? If you're up next speaking on behalf of the government, I would love you to try to address that for us. We need to know, because the community is asking for it. This can't be a contentious thing. This is logistics.

The member for Ottawa South raises a good point: Of course, we service other areas around the province. As critics, we get calls from around the province through our critic portfolios; you take them and you work on them. Logistically, if you have to go and pick up a file or you need to meet with a constituency office worker, then driving five hours when you should be driving half an hour doesn't make any sense.

We hope that the government uses some real common sense here, takes a look at the Wahnapitae First Nation and makes the appropriate changes. I don't know if it can be wrapped up into the Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission. We've asked that that commission be expanded for this sole reason. This is all we want you to look at. I hope that step can be taken.

I thank you for the time, Speaker. I look forward to further debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Grant Crack: Speaker, Bill 45 would, if passed, modernize the voting process, better engage people and make it easier for them to vote. We agreed to continue debate when we reached 6.5 hours of debate on this bill so that more members would have the opportunity to present their views on the bill. This bill, Bill 45, has seen more than 10 and a half hours of debate, and many members of the Legislature have spoken to the bill.

We have also heard during second reading debate the opposition and the third party express their support for this important legislation. The member from Nepean–Carleton said, "I think it's important that we bring in modern technology, which is why the Progressive Conservative Party and our caucus will support this legislation." The member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton said, "All told, this bill has a number of positive things and it's something that we're prepared to support."

However, at this point, much of the debate is now repeating points already made by other members, and I believe it's time that this bill be referred to committee where we will hear from stakeholders and members of the public. As a result, Speaker, I move that this question now be put.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell has moved that the question now be put. I'm satisfied that there has been sufficient debate to allow this question to be put to the House; I believe it's 10 and a half hours.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I definitely heard some noes.

All those in favour of the motion that the question now be put, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Not a chance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Excuse me? In my opinion, the ayes have it—I think I'll say that again.

This will be referred to after question period for the vote.

Vote deferred.

PUTTING CONSUMERS FIRST ACT
(CONSUMER PROTECTION STATUTE
LAW AMENDMENT), 2016

LOI DE 2016 DONNANT LA PRIORITÉ
AUX CONSOMMATEURS (MODIFIANT
DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LA PROTECTION DU CONSOMMATEUR)

Mrs. Lalonde moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 59, An Act to enact a new Act with respect to home inspections and to amend various Acts with respect to financial services and consumer protection / Projet de loi 59, Loi édictant une nouvelle loi concernant les inspections immobilières et modifiant diverses lois concernant les services financiers et la protection du consommateur.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Minister?

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: I will be speaking on this bill this morning, and I hope that everybody will be listening—

Mr. Grant Crack: Attentively.

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Attentively, yes, as my colleague pointed out. I'm very pleased to rise in the Legislature for the second reading of Bill 59, Putting Consumers First Act (Consumer Protection Statute Law Amendment), 2016.

C'est avec plaisir que je prends la parole dans cette Assemblée pour la deuxième lecture du projet de loi 59, la Loi de 2016 donnant la priorité aux consommateurs (modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne la protection du consommateur).

I am proud of our government's ongoing commitment to strengthening consumer protection. The new bill is comprehensive in its approach and, if passed, will better protect consumers both at home and in the marketplace. Our government is investing in stronger consumer protection. It is a priority for us to support a transparent and better-informed marketplace where consumers can count on being treated fairly.

C'est une priorité pour nous de soutenir un marché transparent et mieux éclairé où les consommateurs peuvent être assurés d'être traités équitablement.

I am pleased to speak to the second reading of this bill which, if passed, will enhance consumer protection in the following three areas: regulating the home inspection industry; curbing door-to-door contracts for certain, still to be determined, goods and services; and reducing the risk to consumers who use alternative financial services such as payday loans. These areas are all connected to

our government's approach to improve fairness and transparency and to better protect consumers, whether at their front door or when they enter the marketplace. Bill 59, if passed, would take consumer protection to the next level by closing gaps and extending protection in areas where our government believes it is most needed. It is part of our ongoing efforts to ensure Ontario has some of the strongest consumer protection laws in the country.

One aspect of the bill would respond to a consumer protection gap within the home inspection sector. Home inspectors are one of the only professionals involved in a real estate transaction who are not currently regulated by the province. This means that there are no mandatory qualifications that a home inspector working in Ontario must possess. We know that buying a home is the single-largest purchase that most people will ever make. Many homebuyers will hire a home inspector to help inform this very important decision.

Nous savons que l'achat d'une maison est de loin l'achat le plus important pour la plupart des gens. De nombreux acheteurs de maison retiendront les services d'un inspecteur d'habitations pour informer cette importante décision.

It's estimated that approximately 65% of resale homes sold annually in Ontario had a home inspection completed. A qualified home inspector can offer a consumer a comprehensive evaluation of the condition of a home. Through their expertise, they can assess the structure and identify significant issues such as the condition of the heating system, the state of the roof or the windows. They can provide assessments on how urgently any repairs are needed.

Consumers often rely on the information in a home inspector's report before buying or selling a home. However, without mandatory qualifications, consumers have no guarantee of the quality of the service they are receiving when hiring home inspectors.

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In addition, various home inspection associations set different qualifications, resulting in various levels of competency across the home inspection field. If consumers receive a poor quality or incomplete inspection report when buying or selling a home, they are at risk of being left with unexpected costs or could lose a sale. It could even lead to a health and safety risk.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the proposed legislation, if passed, would take an important step towards increasing consumer protection in the field of home inspection. If passed, Bill 59 would create a new act: the Home Inspection Act, 2016. The proposed legislation would establish mandatory licensing for home inspectors and companies that provide home inspection services to clients in Ontario. Having one licensing regime will assure consumers that they are hiring a qualified professional.

Les changements proposés, si le projet de loi est adopté, permettraient la création d'une nouvelle autorité administrative pour administrer et appliquer le projet de loi et ses règlements connexes.

It would be an independent, not-for-profit corporation funded by licensing fees collected from individuals and businesses in the regulated sector. If and when it is set up, the new body would be responsible for overseeing complaints from consumers. This also could include implementing a disciplinary and appeal process to review violations of the code of ethics, if one is established by legislation. This means greater accountability within the industry, in addition to greater consumer confidence and trust in home inspectors.

The bill, if passed, would allow for regulations to be developed to establish licensing requirements such as education, experience and examination requirements. It would create a code of ethics for home inspectors and companies providing home inspection services. It would adopt a technical standard for home inspection to define what must be inspected. It would standardize home inspection reports and contracts to protect clients and make it easier for them to understand what they are signing. It would set out insurance requirements that balance risk and costs for both the industry and consumers.

If the bill is passed, the government plans to consult with stakeholders and the industry to develop the proposed regulations.

Nous voulons assurer un juste équilibre entre la protection des consommateurs et les coûts acceptables pour le secteur de l'inspection d'habitations.

The proposed requirements for home inspectors, including mandatory licensing, were developed based on recommendations from a panel of 16 experts representing both industry and consumers which was established by my ministry in 2013. The panel confirmed that financial health and safety risks to consumers would be reduced through strengthening consumer protection in the home inspection field. I would like to say thank you to the panel members for their dedication and hard work on this issue. Their expertise helped immensely in the creation of this bill. I believe the proposed legislation, if passed, would support consistent, high-quality home inspection evaluations across Ontario.

Quiconque embauche un inspecteur d'habitations devrait pouvoir compter sur un certain niveau de compétence et d'expertise. Les consommateurs sont en droit de s'attendre à recevoir des conseils adéquats d'un inspecteur d'habitations qualifié.

I am sure that many of the members in this House this morning have a story from a constituent that has received an inadequate home inspection. As I said earlier, buying a home is the largest investment that most of us will make in a lifetime.

Any homebuyer or a prospective homebuyer would agree that purchasing a home is an exciting as well as an anxious process. All prospective homebuyers want to ensure that they get what they paid for with their hard-earned money and that there are as few surprises in the future as possible.

Mr. Speaker, there are many home inspectors in this province who do their jobs well and understand what to look for in a home. These home inspectors are often held in high regard in their communities and are an essential

resource to anyone buying a home. However, it is important to note that currently anybody in Ontario can practise as a home inspector, as there are no minimum standards or qualifications. This has resulted in unethical or careless inspections by inexperienced or careless home inspectors, which has led to major problems for homebuyers as they move into their new homes. These can range from missed structural defects to water damage, and everything in between. Sometimes obvious damages that were missed by an inexperienced or unskilled home inspector can lead to many thousands of dollars in repairs. This can be especially tough for new homebuyers who spent most of their savings on their down payment. Not only can repairs be costly, but the value of the property may also decrease due to the known defects. The more these unsatisfactory home inspections occur, the less likely home inspections in general will happen, as consumers could start to lose trust and confidence in this essential service.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed changes will help ensure that consumers benefit from qualified, consistent advice when buying or selling a home and are better protected from surprise repair costs and safety issues. Consumers and the home inspection industry would benefit from this. Consumers will have peace of mind and will have greater confidence in any home inspection report they view and analyze. With minimum standards and qualifications, home inspectors will be an even more vital part of the real estate transaction.

It's worth noting that many experienced and successful home inspectors are fully on board with the proposed legislation, as it brings accountability to their profession. In the home inspection industry and real estate industry as a whole, leaders such as Tim Hudak say that people have a right to expect high professional standards and government oversight of everyone involved in a real estate transaction. Regulating the home inspection industry will ensure that homebuyers and sellers receive reliable, informative and professional advice when making one of the largest decisions of their lives.

We know that these proposed changes are welcome by the reaction we have seen throughout the past few weeks.

Mr. Speaker, this piece of the proposed legislation is also inspired by a private member's bill put forth by the member from Trinity-Spadina that many here may remember. In March 2016, he introduced the Licensed Home Inspectors Act, which called for regulation of the home inspection industry. His tireless advocacy on behalf of homebuyers in this province is something to be acknowledged and commended. Consumers, industry stakeholders and many in this chamber were extremely supportive of such action. I hope his effort is realized with the passage of the proposed legislation, Bill 59.

Mr. Speaker, there is a consumer protection gap in the home inspection industry, and it must be closed. This is especially true when it comes to the largest investment consumers make in their lifetimes. We certainly must reduce the risk involved accordingly. The proposed changes would, most importantly, allow both buyers and sellers to be more informed about this major investment

and help increase confidence in the home inspection sector.

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Bill 59 also seeks to further curb aggressive door-to-door contracts. Our government has been committed to taking ongoing action to strengthen consumer protection in this area. For example, in 2013, my ministry introduced new rules under the Consumer Protection Act, 2002, to more tightly regulate door-to-door water heater contracts. Consumers were also provided with additional information to make informed decisions.

Depuis l'introduction de changements aux contrats de ventes de chauffe-eau porte-à-porte, le nombre de plaintes et de demandes de renseignements du public à ce sujet a baissé, bien qu'il reste encore élevé.

Our government also implemented tougher rules that will restrict door-to-door energy contracts as of January 1, 2017.

I believe it is time to take further action to better protect consumers at their front door. Aggressive door-to-door sales are a long-standing consumer protection issue. We all know of situations where consumers are approached by someone at their front door using high-pressure tactics to get them to sign a contract that they didn't want or actually need.

Under the existing Consumer Protection Act, door-to-door contracts generally are subject to mandatory disclosure rules and a 10-day cooling-off period. During these 10 days, a consumer can change their mind about a purchase made in their home and cancel the contract.

Water heater door-to-door sales were once identified as a top source of consumer complaints. Our government acted upon this and added additional protection against high-pressure and aggressive door-to-door sales practices used by water heater salespersons by:

—giving consumers a 20-day cooling-off period during which they can cancel their agreement for any reason and get their money back;

—banning the delivery and installation of water heaters during this 20-day period unless the consumer initiated the transaction or there is a pressing safety concern;

—requiring suppliers to provide consumers with the total cost of renting the water heater over a 10-year period as well as comparables for similar water heaters; and

—requiring suppliers to provide improved plain-language disclosure documents to consumers when entering new contracts.

Since implementation of these specific rules, my ministry has seen a reduction in the total number of inquiries and complaints related to hot water heater agreements. However, this is not enough, as we still see many Ontarians who are victimized by predatory door-to-door salespeople.

We believe even stronger measures are needed to protect Ontario's families. That's why we're bringing forward legislative amendments that could be used to ban in-person solicitation for the sale of prescribed items to

consumers at their homes. The changes, if passed, would enable regulations to prohibit a seller from initiating a contract through door-to-door sales of certain goods and services. These items may include water heaters, furnaces, air conditioners and water filters.

We want to address the issue of consumers feeling pressured to sign a contract at their door, and we want to become the first province to seriously limit door-to-door marketing for items which cause the most consumer harm. Ontarians will still be able to initiate doing business with companies at their homes such as calling to replace their furnace when it breaks down in the winter. All consumer-initiated contracts for specific appliances will still have a 10-day cooling off period and mandatory disclosure rules consistent with the current rules.

The proposed legislation, if passed, would lead to the banning of uninvited door-to-door contracts for certain and still to be determined goods and services, which could include home appliances. This would give consumers more protection against aggressive door-to-door marketers who use high-pressure tactics.

My ministry would look at top areas of complaints and further consult with consumers and relevant stakeholders as to which products and services would be affected by the ban.

Ces biens et services pourraient notamment inclure les chauffe-eau, les appareils de chauffage, les climatiseurs et les filtres à eau.

These proposed changes will help to address the long-standing issue of people feeling pressured to sign contracts at their door. Consumers still would be able to contact businesses and initiate and sign contracts in their homes. And as I mentioned, all consumer-initiated contracts for prescribed goods and services will still have a 10-day cooling-off period and mandatory disclosure rules consistent with the current CPA rules that apply to consumer contracts.

Au cours de la période de réflexion de 10 jours, un consommateur peut changer d'avis sur un achat effectué chez lui et annuler le contrat pour toute raison quelconque.

Mr. Speaker, again, we have all heard stories of vulnerable consumers being taken advantage of by predatory door-to-door marketers. There are constant stories in local papers and major media outlets of terrible situations where people are paying thousands of dollars a month to just cover the cost of the appliances they bought from a dishonest door-to-door salesman. This is their hard-earned money going to waste due to falling victim to high-pressure sales tactics.

Just the other day, I heard, actually, from an individual who is extremely encouraged by the proposed legislation. He is especially affected as he manages a heating and cooling, plumbing and electrical company in his city, and his mother was recently a near victim of a door-to-door scam. Her story is similar to many that we all have heard: A door-to-door marketer knocks on her door and claims to be affiliated with the government. With a sense of urgency they convince her to perform a test on her water

filtration system, as she could be in danger due to an inadequate system. She is then told that the water in her home is potentially dangerous and that drinking it can pose a health hazard to both her and her family. It is near impossible for someone not to be anxious and frightened at any type of preventable harm coming upon their family. They tell her that she luckily qualifies for a free installation of a new water filtration system. They even throw in a \$300 rebate to sweeten this supposed deal. This type of emotional sales tactic is commonplace among unethical door-to-door salespeople, as they play with a consumer's rationality and well-meaning nature.

Her son would find out about this predatory door-to-door sale later that day. He brought his mother to both the bank and the police station the next morning to ensure that the contract was actually voided. The contract his mother had signed showed an installation charge on the front page which was crossed out with a giant zero to indicate supposed savings. Once he read the contract further, he found the true cost of this deal in the later pages. Both the new water filtration system and the added water softener were \$59.99 per month plus tax each, and the term was set to 120 months. This means his mother would have paid over \$16,000 over the course of 10 years.

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Interjection.

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: I agree.

This sky-high price disturbed him deeply, especially since his company also sells similar water filtration systems. This particular type of system usually costs under \$3,000, which means this particular scam was potentially worth \$13,000.

It's stories like this that motivated our government to act upon this important issue. Too often, we hear these stories, and oftentimes the victims are not as lucky as the one I just described. These examples and anecdotes stretch far beyond demographics and geography. Victims to these aggressive sales tactics can be a parent, a friend or a neighbour. I am extremely proud to be speaking to this bill today and to know that it has the potential to help many across our great province.

We have heard from companies that sell these kinds of appliances, and they are concerned about the way in which these unscrupulous actors are taking advantage of vulnerable people within their own homes, using dishonest and high-pressure tactics. They are concerned that it's giving their whole industry a bad name. We know there are good operators in this space, and we want to ensure that they have every chance for their business to succeed and that they do not lose business to those who would prey upon the elderly and our vulnerable.

This part of the proposed legislation was inspired by the work and ensuing private member's bill by the member for Etobicoke Centre in. In June 2016, he tabled the Door-to-Door Sales Prohibition Act, which formed the basis for the current proposed legislation. His initiative to protect vulnerable consumers from unethical door-to-door marketers was a result of listening, comprehending

and analyzing the complaints consumers have across Ontario regarding the practice. Several municipalities across the province got on board with the idea as well.

I would once again like to give my sincere thanks to the member from Etobicoke Centre. In fact, Bill 59, if passed, would make Ontario the first province to seriously limit door-to-door contracts of this nature. The changes we are proposing would better protect hard-earned dollars, boost consumer confidence and level the playing field for companies that use fair business practices.

Finally, Bill 59, if passed, would lead to changes that strengthen consumer protection for Ontarians who use high-cost financial products and services outside the mainstream banking and credit union system, such as payday loans. We believe that consumers should have access to credit and other financial services without being exposed to unfair practices or being caught in a revolving cycle of debt. The bill, if passed, would better protect and lessen the burden on people who use alternative financial services and help protect them from unexpected costs.

Our government is concerned about the impact on consumers forced to use alternative financial services such as payday loans. Consumer groups have told us that payday loans are an important source of money for people who do not have access to other credit. However, we remain concerned about consumers being unduly burdened by the high costs of using these alternative financial services and becoming trapped in a spiraling circle of debt. We are committed to making sure that people who use these services are better protected and have the information they need to make the best decision for their circumstances.

Alternative financial services include payday loans, installment loans and rent-to-own services. The proposed changes would also create regulation-making authority that could be used to provide a grace period for late payments in rent-to-own agreements and to set maximums on the cost of optional services for instalment loans.

The bill, if passed, would also address services for cashing government cheques and better protect consumers with debts in collection.

The proposed changes, if passed, would benefit consumers who use a range of alternative financial services.

Mr. Speaker, it is a reality that some Ontario families must turn to alternative sources of credit, such as payday loans, to pay for basics like rent and groceries. Others must rely on these sources of credit to cope with unexpected expenses such as car repairs. Our government wants to ensure that users of alternative financial services are better protected and better informed.

Les consommateurs devraient avoir accès à un marché équitable pour des services financiers qui ne créent pas un fardeau déraisonnable.

The proposed legislation, if passed, would involve amending several laws, including the Payday Loans Act, 2008, the Consumer Protection Act, 2002, and the Collection and Debt Settlement Services Act.

The proposed changes for the Payday Loans Act, 2008, would provide the registrar of payday loans with authority to inspect unlicensed lenders. The government would also be given regulation-making authority that could be used to:

- set out standards or factors that payday lenders would have to take into account before entering into payday loan agreements with borrowers;
- restrict high-frequency borrowing;
- provide repeat payday loan borrowers with an extended payment plan option; and
- further improve disclosures so that consumers can make informed decisions.

The proposed changes would help consumers using payday loans to avoid repeat borrowing.

Notre gouvernement veut également améliorer la sensibilisation des emprunteurs de prêts sur salaire à propos des services-conseils en matière de crédit.

We plan to take steps to ensure consumers have access to the information and guidance to help them better understand their debts and rights. This would support them in making better informed decisions about using alternative financial services.

The bill, if passed, would also amend the Municipal Act, 2001, and the City of Toronto Act, 2006. The amendments would allow municipalities to regulate the number and location of payday lenders by passing by-laws.

Changes are also proposed to the Consumer Protection Act, 2002. The act would be amended to create regulation-making powers that could be used to better protect users of credit agreements, like instalment loans, and lease agreements, like rent-to-own services.

The bill, if passed, also would amend the Collection and Debt Settlement Services Act to:

- broaden the category of debts to which debt collection rules apply;
- create regulation-making power that could be used to provide more information to be disclosed to debtors in the collection process; and
- allow the ministry to levy administrative monetary penalties under the act.

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Mr. Percy Hatfield: A point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): A point of order, the member from Windsor—Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Just looking around, I don't think we have a quorum present.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Clerk's table will count for a quorum.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): A quorum is not present.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): A quorum is not present. Ring the bells.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): A quorum is now present.

Continue.

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: These provisions would ensure that consumers with debt in collection are better protected from overly aggressive debt collection practices. The proposed changes would mean that firms that purchase debt for the purpose of collecting it would be subject to the same rules as collection agencies; for example, limiting when debt collectors can call and who they can contact.

The proposed changes would create regulation-making powers that could be used to better inform consumers about alternative financial services, and this would reduce the likelihood of them being surprised by the costs or conditions of using these services.

Des coûts imprévus peuvent causer aux consommateurs qui sont déjà dans le besoin de plus grandes difficultés financières. Ainsi, ces modifications proposées sont d'une importance particulière.

The proposed legislation, if passed, would make the province a leader in Canada in taking action to better protect consumers from the risks of using alternative financial services. In addition to Bill 59, our government has been exploring other ways to help consumers who rely on high-cost borrowing services. To support this, we launched a public consultation in April 2016 on the current maximum total costs of borrowing payday loans. Again, consumer groups told us that payday loans are an important source of money for people who do not have access to other forms of credit. We heard from consumers' advocates and consumers' agencies that banning payday loans could cause financial harm to those who rely on them. They asked us to protect this source of credit for families and individuals who use payday loans regularly to meet their day-to-day obligations. They also told us that reducing the costs of borrowing a payday loan will help people who have no choice but to make use of them.

Mr. Speaker, our government listened and is taking steps to reduce the current maximum cost of borrowing, which is \$21 per \$100 borrowed today. Starting on January 1, 2017, the total maximum cost of a payday loan will drop to \$18 per \$100 borrowed. It will drop further to \$15 per \$100 borrowed starting on January 1, 2018. These reductions will make Ontario's new rate among the lowest in Canada.

Our government takes the protection of all consumers seriously. As you can see, Mr. Speaker, our government has been working on several fronts to better protect consumers using alternative financial services. The payday loans industry has been growing steadily throughout the past few years as reliance on these loans has increased significantly. Many of the members, me included, live in cities or municipalities where payday loan establishments have, we would say, almost grown like mushrooms in certain neighbourhoods over the years. In some cities, you can walk down the street with many payday loan establishments dotting just a single city block.

The availability of payday loan shops is often directly correlated to the proportion of low-income, vulnerable

and at-risk borrowers. If payday loans are more visible for consumers, consumers in need are also more likely to rely on these lenders. As I mentioned earlier, the proposed legislation, if passed, would amend both the Municipal Act and the City of Toronto Act to allow for more local decision-making in the ability and the prevalence of payday loans, especially in higher risk areas.

By being allowed to pass bylaws to establish zoning rules for payday loans, municipalities can take an informed and direct approach to slow or stop the growth of payday loan establishments. If they're not as abundantly available, some consumers may be less likely to rely on them. Giving municipalities more powers in regard to this issue is a result of listening to their concerns in consultations and meetings.

We know there are many people for whom payday loans are a last resort, and due to the costly nature of these loans, we would like to keep it as such: a last resort. The main issue for most is not the initial loan, but getting trapped in a debt spiral when prior loans are paid off with new loans. These financial instruments have very high interest, and when desperate, borrowers may see past this.

I have been to towns and cities across Ontario and seen some of the ingenious ways business lenders are helping financially vulnerable consumers in their communities. Some are now offering low-interest loan instruments to help people break away from predatory payday cycles. I applaud the emergence of socially responsible initiatives and encourage their development in communities across the province.

As for the payday loan industry, we know that awareness is not enough and that stronger regulation is needed to ensure a fair and safe marketplace for the people of this province.

We also know that overregulating the industry will not decrease demand for the product. Demand is constant and consistent for fast, short-term loans, such as payday loans. If the risk or cost of business is too high for payday lenders, they would obviously go out of business. This would force similar loan instruments underground where there are no protections as regulation is impossible. Like most consumer protection measures, we must ensure that the cost of doing business is at a manageable level, while maximizing protection for consumers.

The proposed legislation, if passed, would help vulnerable borrowers immensely. Bill 59 is an important component of our overall efforts to reduce the risk and better inform consumers. If the proposed legislation is passed, we plan to further engage stakeholders to inform the drafting of supporting regulations. We hope to move forward with these important next steps of strengthening consumer protection, and will continue to seek ways to reduce the demand and impact of consumers using alternative financial services.

Mr. Speaker, this is a bill that all Ontarians can get behind. We have seen widespread support of the bill from consumers, as well as many in the affected industries.

Bill 59 is the culmination of extensive consultation with consumers, industry stakeholders and other levels of government. Our government is dedicated to creating the protection consumers across the province need and deserve. We also strive to ensure that those who practise good business practices are not penalized and continue to succeed in their respective marketplaces.

Since 2003, our government has helped consumers make informed choices to protect their hard-earned money.

The Putting Consumers First Act, if passed, will strengthen consumer protections by introducing new rules for home inspections, door-to-door sales and payday loans. Through the proposed legislative changes, our government would further demonstrate our commitment to addressing the needs of consumers and putting them first by better protecting them and reducing the risks they face.

Grâce au projet de loi, s'il est adopté, nous poursuivrons encore le renforcement de la protection des consommateurs pour tous les Ontariens, autant à domicile que dans le marché.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for listening, and I thank everyone. Merci.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1011 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Steve Clark: It gives me great pleasure to introduce two members of the Brockville Police Service who are here as part of the PAO day today at Queen's Park. I'd like to welcome April Muldoon and Eric Ruigrok. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to welcome back one of our own. Joining us shortly will be a former legislative page who represented Mississauga-Streetsville: Megan Sweetman, who will be here today with her grade 10 civics and career class from Toronto District Christian High School in Woodbridge.

And of course, my old friend Bruce Chapman is here as the president of the Police Association.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to introduce to the Legislature Irina Roudenko and Peter Hernandez, who are constituents; Peggy Allen from Oshawa, who is with the Ontario Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists; and the students and teachers from R. S. McLaughlin CVI and from St. John Paul II in Whitby and Oshawa.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: We have four members of the Windsor Police Association here today for the lobby day and a reception later this afternoon, to which everyone is invited: Ed Parent, Carol Forbes, Mike Hradowy and Paul Gratton. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Michael Coteau: It's my honour to welcome Andrea Coke, a speech-language pathologist from the

beautiful riding of Don Valley East, here to the Legislature today.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to introduce Mike Routly and Mitch Blair of the Woodstock Police Service, here today with the Police Association of Ontario. I want to thank them and welcome them to Queen's Park.

Hon. Chris Ballard: I'd like to welcome a constituent of mine from Newmarket-Aurora: Shelley Gardiner. Shelley and her colleagues are here at Queen's Park today on behalf of the Ontario Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm proud to welcome, from the Police Association of Ontario, Mike McGuire and Kevin VanRooyen.

Hon. David Orazietti: I'd like to introduce Bruce Chapman, Stephen Reid, Mark Baxter, Jim Glena, Jason DeJong, Larry Wood, Dave MacLean and Jay Yocom from the Police Association of Ontario.

I want to thank all members from the Police Association who are here today for the work that they do.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome a number of members from the Ontario Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists. I had a chance to have breakfast with them this morning: Melanie Gravel and Richard Holmes from Kitchener-Waterloo and Teresina Chan from Willowdale.

I'd also like to welcome three members from the Belleville Police Association who are here with us today: Rene Aubertin, Anne Brennan-Walsh and Andrew Fry.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Joining us from my riding of Barrie today is Constable Pat Brouillard with the Police Association of Ontario.

I would like to also welcome children's lawyer Sonya Jain.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like to introduce Mary Cook, the executive director of the Ontario Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists, who is also from my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock; and Jerry Bonavita, also with the OSLA and from my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to welcome, from the Police Association of Ontario, Mark Egers, Tim Reparon, John Foster and Mike Stotts. Welcome.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I would like to introduce Randy Henning, Tim Morrison and Brad Durst from the Durham Regional Police Services Board. I would like to extend a very warm welcome to them here at Queen's Park.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Today I would like to introduce two constituents from our riding of Nipissing: Susan Sheehan and Bud Fisher.

As well, I'd like to introduce a young student, Allie Annibale. She was here this morning as part of the Ontario Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to introduce four police officers here from Niagara today: Leanne McClay,

Patrick McGilly, Rick “Flash” Gordon and Neal Orlando. They all do tremendous work with the Niagara Region Police Association.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I’d like to welcome to Queen’s Park Nathan Clarke, Matt Lawrence, Katie Andres, Darlene Sanders and Sergeant Terry Teno of the Port Hope Police Association, and a special congratulations to Sergeant Teno, who has served the association for 25 years and the police services for 30. They’re behind me.

Mr. Bill Walker: I’d like to welcome all members of the PAO and especially Andy Robson and Glen Tremblay from the Owen Sound Police Service.

Mr. Speaker, today it was announced that Owen Sound is one of 22 must-visit hockey towns in North America. Come visit Owen Sound.

Mr. Todd Smith: There you go: home of the Attack.

Mr. Bill Walker: The Attack.

Mr. John Fraser: I’d like to welcome, from the Ottawa Police Association, Brian Samuel, James McGarry and Dan Brennan, just over here in the gallery.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I’d like to welcome, from the Ontario police association, Cam Gough, Sean Bambrick, Jason Cahill and all of the other members from the Kingston police force who are with us today. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Mr. James J. Bradley: I’d like to welcome to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario today representatives of the Niagara Region Police Association, who are in the members’ gallery to the east.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I would like to introduce members of the Ontario police association whom I’ll be meeting with later on this afternoon: Mike Robinson, Ozzie Nethersole, Matt Drake and Chris Ross.

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I would like to welcome members of the Halton police association. Here today are Sarah Diamond, Sheri Grigsby, Rob Todd and Shane Barnes. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I, too, would like to welcome folks from the Ontario police association, including Randy Henning from Durham region.

I also want to acknowledge the people in today from the Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists, especially Lee-Ann Kant, a speech-language pathologist from the great riding of Pickering–Scarborough East.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Today our page captain is Henry Klinck, and he’s joined today by his grandfather, Keith Strong, and his uncle, Scott Strong, of Oakville. Please welcome them to Queen’s Park.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I’m pleased to welcome to Queen’s Park a couple of members of the Thunder Bay Police Association: Rob Steudle and Jim Glenna.

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: I’d like to welcome today, from Waterloo region and the police association, members I met with this morning: Mark Egers, Tim Reparon, John Foster and Beverley Walker. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It gives me great pleasure to introduce some people who are visiting here today in the members’ gallery: Rui Ferreira, and from Portugal, Igor

França and Gui Costa, who are here to participate in the events going on at Casa dos Aços on the 19th cultural week there. Welcome.

Mr. Paul Miller: I’d like to welcome the Hamilton regional police here. Unfortunately, I wasn’t given a list of the participants, but I’m sure I’ll be seeing them today. They’re welcome.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It’s my pleasure to introduce a couple of youth advocates from Beaches–East York: Alex Tuck and Ben Quinton. They’re up in the strangers’ gallery on the west side.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I am delighted to welcome to the Ontario Legislature two of my constituents from Kitchener Centre. They are Marie Morrison and Lynn Macaulay. They are here to have lunch with me. Welcome, ladies.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In the Speaker’s gallery today are guests from the Police Association of Ontario: Mr. Larry Wood, and, from Brantford, Ontario, Mr. Mark Baxter. Welcome. Thank you for joining us today at Queen’s Park.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I used to get the last word. The member from Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: Sorry, Speaker. I really want to introduce some of Waterloo region’s finest, who are here with us today in question period for the first time. Welcome, folks, to Queen’s Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Minister of Energy. I recently toured the Ottawa Mission. They do fantastic work supporting some of the city’s most vulnerable, the people who need our assistance the most. But now even the mission itself needs Ontario’s help.

1040

They told me one of the issues facing the mission and their ability to succeed is skyrocketing hydro rates. The Liberal hydro plan is taking important, precious funds away from the mission helping take care of Ottawa’s most vulnerable. Instead, the services that the mission wants to provide, they can’t, because of this hydro mess.

Mr. Speaker, do the Liberals believe that places like the Ottawa Mission should be paying for hydro over helping the most vulnerable?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I’m pleased to rise to that question. We’ve done, on this side of the House, many things that help residents that actually use the mission, but also help organizations like the mission who are doing great work to actually find ways to reduce their energy consumption. Come January 1, Mr. Speaker, they’re going to see their electricity bill reduced by 8% thanks to this government bringing forward a bill to permanently remove the HST from their bills.

There are also many things that we are doing to help the residents that actually use the shelter. For those that actually need some assistance, they can actually get it

from this side, the government. We also have a great minister looking into housing and poverty. So we're doing many things to help these families.

But I find it very interesting, coming from a party that has no plan on electricity, Mr. Speaker. They have no idea. The only thing they want to do is go back to burning coal. That's not what we will do on this side of the House. We'll continue to advocate for a clean, reliable system.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the minister: No one believes for a second that hydro bills are going down under this government. Years of Liberal scandal, waste and mismanagement have created a hydro crisis in our province. It's because of that crisis that Ontario businesses and families are struggling to pay their bills. Small businesses are the backbone of our economy, but because of Liberal rate increases, many are faced with the prospect of closing their doors.

Recently I visited the Grimsby Diner. The Grimsby Diner is only open during peak hours. It has no choice but to pay the most expensive rates in North America; they can't choose when to serve breakfast. But within a one-year period, the business's hydro bills—

Interjections.

Mr. Patrick Brown: I know the Liberals don't want to hear this, and they heckle me. They don't want to hear it. But this business's bills in one year have gone up 25%. My question to the Minister of Energy: Rather than spin and attacking others, what are you going to do to keep small businesses afloat in the province of Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm very pleased, again, to rise and to talk about the great programs that we put in place, Mr. Speaker, to help small businesses. We're going to see that 8% reduction as of January 1 for many small businesses right across the province, as well as family farms. They're going to see an 8% reduction.

We're also seeing the ICI program which is going to open up for another 1,000 businesses. That's going to really help many of our small- and medium-size enterprises right across our great province. When you talk about the ICI program, we've had 80 new participants just recently come and sign up for that program, because they know that they can actually save up to one third on their hydro bills. That's something that they're very excited about.

On this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to invest in a clean, reliable system. On that side of the House, they have no plan. The only thing that they want to go back to is burning coal.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Minister of Energy: All we hear are false allegations and more Liberal spin. Mr. Speaker, you hear the Minister of Energy—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock. Finish, please.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Energy says they have an 8% rebate. What he doesn't mention is the 10% clean energy rebate is gone. Hydro bills are not going down and Ontarians are growing tired of the excuses. The fact that I heard that in Ottawa-Vanier, a Liberal campaign worker told an individual struggling with his bill that they had to put on a winter coat and turn down their—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're not being helpful, member from Leeds-Grenville, when I'm trying to get the other side's attention.

Mr. Steve Clark: Sorry, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now I'm contemplating going into warnings. I'll let you know quickly if you've decided you want that.

Finish, please.

Mr. Patrick Brown: I can tell you that Michel in Ottawa-Vanier didn't appreciate being told to put on a winter coat and turn down the thermostat by Liberal headquarters. I'll give you a little piece of friendly advice: that shouldn't be your talking point. We want answers. We want solutions. Frankly, Michel in Ottawa, he deserves an apology. Will the Minister of Energy and will the Premier apologize for that callous comment?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Some members are helping me make that decision very quickly, particularly those that try to claim that they don't heckle.

Minister.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: The only party that should be apologizing is that party for leaving our system in decay for so long. It was this government that actually had to step up and fix it, making sure that we invested in a clean and reliable system. We actually stopped burning coal on this side of the House. You know what? On that side of the House, they have no plan. They have nothing to tell Michel.

On this side of the House, we have many things to tell Michel: an 8% reduction coming January 1, six programs that are there to help him. We also have great work in many other aspects when it comes to energy.

So we don't have a problem standing up and talking about a system that we had to clean up from them. We are very proud of what we've done, and we'll continue to advocate for the people of this province.

FIRST RESPONDERS

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Deputy Premier. On my first day in the Legislature, I stood up

and called on the government to create a heroes' fund for our province's first responders, for the families that have lost a loved one, a hero in our community.

I think back to nine years ago when a Midhurst resident just outside of Barrie, Detective Constable Rob Plunkett, lost his life in the line of duty. It shook our community. I remember the impact it had on Barrie and Simcoe county. Sadly, tragedies like Detective Constable Rob Plunkett happen far too often. Families of our fallen officers need the province's full support.

On my first day as an MPP in the Legislature, I asked this question. The Premier said it would be considered. Here we are a year later, and I'm asking the Deputy Premier to update us. Will we take care of our first responders? Will we take care of our fallen heroes and their families?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you for the question. I think all members of the House are pleased to see our first responders here with us today who are represented by our police officers in the province of Ontario. One of the things I think you can do to best serve the people that serve us—the people that are running into buildings when we're running out, the people that are going after the people that have violent thoughts on their mind and even violent actions—is to ensure that when they run into some trouble, when they find themselves in a situation where PTSD becomes a real reality to that person—in the past we've put that away. In the past we haven't dealt with it.

This government decided it was going to deal with it. It was going to deal with it upfront. It brought in Bill 163, which provides presumptive legislation for those people that help us when we need that help the most. The best thing that any government can do to demonstrate its support is to ensure that its province leads the country—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Deputy Premier. The bill on PTSD only happened after the opposition shamed the government for six months. My question was on a heroes' fund, and I did not get an answer on a heroes' fund, so I'll try something different—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

First, I don't need opposition members to armchair whether or not I'm going to stand. Second of all, we're moving to warnings. That's what you asked for; you're getting it. And I'll be strict.

Finish, please.

1050

Mr. Patrick Brown: I did not get an answer on the heroes' fund, so I'll try something else. The Liberals have now cut, pretty much across the board, mental health facilities in the province of Ontario. We've read out in this Legislature the staff cuts at each facility. In fact, this is actually causing the police to do work that they're not initially required or meant to do. Between 2007 and 2013, the OPP saw a 42% increase in calls for

services related to mental health because we underfund mental health in the province of Ontario.

My question is to the Deputy Premier: Will we see a real commitment to mental health? Because if you download it, you still pay for it. There is one taxpayer. We need proper support for—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Let me set the record straight on the PTSD bill, which deals directly with the mental health of the first responders that go out each and every day to help protect this community. You were nowhere to be found when this bill started out. You were—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Davenport is warned. The member from Simcoe—Grey is warned. Anyone else?

The member will address the Chair.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: There are an awful lot of people who have put an awful lot of work into the post-traumatic stress disorder bill that's going to serve the first responders that serve this community. It came from the first responders themselves. It involved a round table. It involved summit meetings. It involved getting all the input to make this province a leader when it comes to post-traumatic stress disorder.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin—Caledon is warned.

Wrap up, please.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It came also with the support of a member of the third party, Cheri DiNovo, the member from Parkdale—High Park. Instead of just chirping on the sidelines, she had her sleeves rolled up and she was working on this issue.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Deputy Premier: The shootings have continued in Ottawa and this government has cancelled the funding for Ottawa's anti-guns and gangs unit.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the mayor of Ottawa, former Liberal cabinet minister Jim Watson, posed a demand and a question to this government recently in his Ottawa survey. Mayor Watson wrote, "Ottawa has seen an increase in the number of shootings in our city. Would you support providing ongoing sustainable funding for our Ottawa Police DART and guns and gangs teams" that have been cut by the province, so that they can actually "combat this serious challenge?"

The PC Party supports restoring the funding, but it appears the Liberals do not. Mr. Speaker, my question to the government is, will they commit today to restoring the funding they cut? And if they won't do it for the PCs,

if they won't do it for public safety in Ottawa, will you do it for Jim? Will you support public safety—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. The Minister—

Mr. Patrick Brown: Do it for Jim.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not helpful. And the Minister of Children and Youth Services is warned.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, Speaker. The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. David Orazietti: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. First of all, the member opposite needs to get his facts correct, because they're wrong. The city of Ottawa Police Service received over \$7 million in funding in 2015-16. Let's stop misrepresenting what Mayor Watson says.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Beaches-East York is warned.

The minister will withdraw.

Hon. David Orazietti: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on.

Hon. David Orazietti: So we'll call that "inaccuracy," and we'll go on to say that there's in fact an increase of \$300,000 in funding at Ottawa Police Service. In fact, they've hired 25 additional officers, and we continue to invest in these resources to support our police services.

But here, let me read you something else, Speaker. This is really important. In the by-election going on right now, Bruce Chapman said this of the opposition: "Your decision to endorse Mr. Marin is an insult to the work done by the thousands of men and women who have chosen policing in Ontario as a profession."

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Etobicoke North is warned. As a reminder to those who think they can still get quips in: Once you're warned, the next time you're out.

New question.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Acting Premier. Pat Sorbara was charged with two counts of violating the Election Act. The first charge involves and relates to Andrew Olivier and includes a recording where Ms. Sorbara allegedly says the following: "You're being asked to do the ... favour I guess to make the sacrifice this time, and that can also go a long way, in terms of opening up options...."

The second count reads as follows: that Ms. Sorbara did "directly or indirectly give, procure or promise or agree to procure an office of employment to induce a person, to wit, Glenn Thibeault, to become a candidate contrary to section 96.1(e) of the Election Act."

Now, the Attorney General and the government continue to say that the Minister of Energy is not involved in this matter in any way whatsoever. However, the OPP believe that he was directly offered a bribe, that there's an allegation of a bribe and he's the subject matter of it. Does the government believe that this is appropriate in any way?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: One of the things I did the other day is that I looked at the member opposite's bio, to see what kind of things he's done in his life. In his bio, he talks quite openly and passionately about how he was a defence counsel. He helped a lot of people within our criminal justice system, which is admirable. As a lawyer, I can tell you that is admirable work, and I thank him for doing that.

But I also know that as a result of his education and his legal profession, he very fundamentally believes in the presumption of innocence. He also very much believes in the role of our court system and how individuals should have their time in court—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Essex is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: —that individuals should have their time in court. So I hope the member will remember all those principles, all those key aspects of our justice system when he's asking these questions in the House. He knows very much that this is not the place to litigate a matter that is before the courts.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I absolutely believe in the presumption of innocence. I think that it's a very powerful principle. But the reality is that the Minister of Energy is the subject matter of a serious offence, even though it's an allegation. The allegation is that Ms. Sorbara is charged with allegedly bribing the Minister of Energy to run for the Premier's party. Given that direct allegation, it's appropriate for the government to do something.

If the government won't ask the minister to step aside now, will they ask the minister to step aside if Ms. Sorbara is found guilty of this offence?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The member opposite believes in the presumption of innocence, but he has made a determination, in his mind, that the Minister of Energy somehow is guilty. That's exactly what his questions point to. This is not the place or the venue to have that conversation.

Speaker, you have spoken about that issue. The standing orders rules are very clear that when it comes to matters before the courts, the most appropriate venue for that matter to be discussed is in the courthouse, not in the Legislature. We should not be engaging or doing anything that is going to prejudice the court's proceedings.

I ask the member opposite—he knows his training well. I know his beliefs. He believes in the presumption of innocence. He believes in the fact that the courts are

the venues where matters are to be dealt with. Our standing orders rules are very clear. I hope that he respects the rules.

Let's discuss issues that are very important to Ontarians, like building this province up, like building our infrastructure, schools and hospitals.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Again, the minister is confusing the issue here. We're not talking about whether the minister is guilty of an offence. He's simply the subject matter of an allegation. Given that he's the subject matter of an allegation, it's appropriate for him to step down.

If the government wants to show the people of Ontario and the people of Sudbury that they're serious about running an open and honest and transparent government, it would maintain integrity and faith in the government if the government would do the right thing. Protecting Liberal insiders that the OPP believed are the subject matter of an offence is not being open and transparent.

The government is good at talking the talk, but they're not good at walking the walk. Walking the walk would require the government to do something to ensure that people have faith in this system.

When will the government finally do the right thing and during these allegations—he's not guilty of an offence—have the minister step aside?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton—Lawrence is warned.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, having something alleged against you or being a subject matter of an allegation, as the member opposite puts it, does not make you guilty, does not somehow confirm that you did something wrong. There are no charges laid against the Minister of Energy. The matters in question have nothing to do with the scope of his job as the Minister of Energy.

I think that what's happening is the third party, the NDP, cannot get over the fact that they lost their seat and that the member, who used to belong to the NDP, saw the light, became a Liberal, worked extremely hard, got elected and continues to serve his riding every single day with full vigour. They cannot get over the fact, so they're making a personal vendetta against the Minister of Energy, against the member for Sudbury, who is a passionate advocate for his community.

We stand with him. We stand for everything he's doing in his community of Sudbury, and he'll continue to serve—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

New question.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Acting Premier. Both the Liberals and the Conservatives have a disappointing record when it comes to health in west

Niagara. Thousands of people had to rally in the 1990s to stop the Conservatives from shutting down West Lincoln Memorial Hospital. They had to rally again in 2012 when the Liberals cancelled the new hospital redevelopment project.

Today, the hospital is still in desperate need of replacement. We're hearing about serious challenges in the emergency department, and now, through freedom of information, New Democrats have learned that the medical and surgical beds at West Lincoln Memorial have been operating at over 100% capacity for the past 12 months straight.

Why is this Liberal government forcing hospitals like West Lincoln Memorial to become dangerously overcrowded and forcing patients to pay the price?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the nicely timed question today. The provision of health services, including through our hospitals, is one of the top priorities of this government. Obviously, as Minister of Health, it is my top priority. That's why we continue to make investments, as recently as this week, with an additional \$140 million announced in the fall economic statement. This fiscal year, it goes specifically to operating costs for our hospitals. That means that this year in total, the increase in operating funding to hospitals right across this province is in excess of 3%.

I can guarantee the member opposite that that announcement this week includes an increase in the operating funding this year for West Lincoln hospital. It includes, as well, earlier this year in January, where we announced that we provided an additional \$4.9 million to West Lincoln. West Lincoln is a preoccupation of mine. I know it's situated within the network that's represented by Hamilton Health Sciences.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Actually, Minister, I'm surprised at that answer. Medical and surgical beds should have a maximum occupancy of 85% to 90%. He knows that, as a physician. That's what the local LHIN said, which you guys appointed—the LHIN. But under the Liberal government, West Lincoln's medical and surgical beds have been forced to operate at over 100% capacity for 23 of the last 30 months. And this September, the occupancy rate soared to 120%. That's a shocking statistic, Speaker.

The number represents real lives. It's real people who are forced to deal with overcrowded conditions and long waits in hospital hallways. When will this Liberal government get serious about the state of our hospitals? When will they finally tackle the dangerous overcrowding in Ontario hospitals?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know that this is an important issue. We've received a proposal from Hamilton Health Sciences. The member opposite knows that that network of hospitals has responsibility, including for West Lincoln hospital. They have submitted a proposal and they've prioritized certain investments that they believe are both opportune and appropriate for West Lincoln as well as other hospital members of that network. We're

looking at that and we're working closely with Hamilton Health Sciences.

I do also know that our member, or rather I should say the Liberal candidate—

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The future member.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: —hopefully the future member—the Liberal candidate running in the by-election in Niagara, Vicky Ringuette, is strongly focused on working towards improving the conditions in the emergency in the general hospital at West Lincoln. It's one of her top priorities. I know that it's an issue that's important to the individuals in that by-election. I suspect that's why the member raised it today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Paul Miller: West Lincoln hospital has been operating at the current site since the 1940s. So on top of a dangerously high occupancy rate, the hospital's infrastructure is totally outdated. I toured it; it's pathetic. Once upon a time, the Liberal government knew that this hospital needed to be rebuilt, but in the 2012 budget, the Liberals cancelled the redevelopment with a stroke of a pen. The people of west Niagara need quality health care in an updated facility, but under the Liberal government, West Lincoln hospital is outdated, overcrowded and antiquated. And this government is doing nothing to help patients and staff there.

When will this government stop doing what the Conservatives did, stop cutting our hospitals and finally rebuild the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital, which services a large area and is close to my constituency also?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Again, I appreciate the fact that the member opposite has raised this issue. There is a process in place. I hope he would agree that it's incumbent upon us to work with the LHIN and work with the local hospital network, the Hamilton Health Sciences network, to determine the priorities, to look to them with regard to recommendations on how we can continue to build the health services throughout that entire region—just like we've committed to a new Niagara hospital, just like we've built a new hospital in St. Catharines. These are important investments, and we'll continue to make them.

In the meantime, I think that it is important that Ontarians, and particularly the people who utilize that hospital, understand that we made an additional nearly \$5-million investment in the capital costs earlier this year, as well as an increase announced just this week, which will provide additional funds to deal with some of those pressures.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Good morning. My question is for the Minister of Education this morning.

1110

Minister, last spring your predecessor was on the verge of closing the province's demonstration schools. That would have ended all hope for some of Ontario's children with severe learning disabilities.

While the former Minister of Education insisted that money wasn't an issue, the public accounts tell a different story. The schools in Belleville, Milton, London, Brantford and Ottawa are paying \$700,000 more per year on their electricity bills than they were in 2009. The Centre Jules-Léger school, CJL, in downtown Ottawa and Sagonaska school in my riding have seen their hydro spike by 62%. That has an effect on the bottom line.

Speaker, is the minister okay with flushing that much money out of classrooms at CJL in downtown Ottawa and Sagonaska to pay for her government's disastrous energy policy?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the member opposite for that question. Mr. Speaker, our government is very committed to ensuring that all students who require support receive that support. The work that we're doing in our provincial demonstration schools is ensuring that students who have a learning disability get the supports they need.

I was very proud, after the consultation process happened, that we looked at, how do we bring these great services that are happening in our provincial demonstration schools closer to local communities and into local school boards? That is exactly what we're doing. I had the opportunity to announce that we have a pilot program in eight boards that are looking at that exact question: How do we actually bring these great services to our local communities so that all students who need the support and the services have them closer to home?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Todd Smith: Back to the minister: Millions of dollars are being flushed out of our school system because of this government's reckless electricity policy.

The reason we know how much is being pulled out of our provincial schools is because those provincial schools don't belong to a school board. We don't know how much the other schools across the province are seeing their electricity costs go up, even though the government's own document states, "The increase in estimates from 2015-16 to 2016-17 primarily reflects increases in operating costs including utilities." That has to be millions and millions of dollars from our school system.

Parents deserve to know how much the Liberal energy policies are having an effect on our education system. Speaker, can the minister tell us: Can she address the electricity issue? How many educational assistants, early childhood educators and other support staff have been flushed out of our schools because of their reckless Liberal energy policies?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: It's really sad, it's quite unfortunate that the member opposite has forgotten that he ran on a policy of cutting supports and services in our school system—100,000 jobs. In fact, they were very, very proud of the fact that they were going to reduce supports for teachers and education workers in our classrooms.

Mr. Speaker, this government has provided more education funding on a per student, per pupil basis than in any other time—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Windsor West and the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound are warned.

Finish, please. Wrap up.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Mr. Speaker, we've increased, since 2002-03, funding to our education system by—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward-Hastings is warned.

Finish, please.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: We've increased funding by 59%, Mr. Speaker—59%. We've increased the per pupil funding by \$4,500, and that includes all of our students in special education who need that support.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Far too many people in Ontario are living through a mental health care crisis because they can't get the care they need. My constituent Jan walked into the emergency department at London Health Sciences Centre in desperate need for mental health care. She was in complete distress after days of suffering alone, but Jan waited seven hours in emergency before being told that no mental health beds were available and the best she could do was to add her name to an ever-growing wait-list for mental health services.

My question is simple. Why is this government still failing people like Jan, who need mental health care in London and just can't get it?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm sorry that Jan did not receive the care that she deserved and that we have a responsibility to provide in a timely fashion. Obviously I don't know the specifics of the individual's situation, but I need to speak to the fact that we have made, as I would describe, remarkable investments in mental health in this province. Not just financial investments, but I think we have created a culture where all of us acknowledge and are more comfortable and more deliberate in speaking openly about mental health challenges that Ontarians face. It is one out of every five Ontarians.

We have doubled—added—an additional \$500 million to the mental health budget since we took office, and we're adding more than \$200 million to that over the course of the next three years.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The police association is here today, and they know Jan's story is all too common. Despite what the government says, the people in London know there is a crisis in mental health care. People who are thinking about suicide and living in complete distress cannot get the immediate care and support. We have a serious problem. We are at a tipping point, yet this government refuses to tackle overcrowding in our hospitals and refuses to eliminate the wait-list for mental health care.

What will it take for this government to listen to Jan and thousands of people like her who need mental health care but just can't get it?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Our priority, of course, has to be to focus on individual patients like Jan to make sure that she's getting the support that she needs. It's also important to recognize that we are transitioning into what I would describe as a better model of providing mental health services for many, many individuals who face challenges, and that's actually providing those strong supports within the community.

In fact, we've done just that in London itself, where we have funded this year a brand new mental health and addictions crisis centre that, on an outpatient basis, provides wraparound supports and intersections with other community agencies for more than 2,000 additional Londoners and people from the London region than were provided with that service before.

It's that combination of making sure that the hospital services are there for those who truly need hospital services, but that our community supports are strong and are able to provide the support as well.

ADOPTION

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, as an educator and as a parent, I know that being part of a stable family unit positively impacts a child's health, well-being and potential for success. This November marks Adoption Awareness Month, and we know adoption can provide a lifetime of benefits for children.

As an adoptee myself, I have been the recipient of a very positive family organization. I thank my biological and adoptive parents for this. In Ontario there are many children and youth currently eligible and deserving of adoption. It is important that these children and youth find good permanent homes with loving and caring families that can positively impact their lives.

Speaker, can the minister tell the House what he is doing to ensure children and youth in care find a permanent home with a loving and caring family?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I want to start by thanking the member from Barrie for this important question. I know that she has been a lifelong supporter of young people here in the province of Ontario as an educator. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, there's no question in my mind that when a young person is placed into a supportive family that is caring, stable and permanent, they benefit from this. We've taken a number of steps at our ministry to make sure we put in place a process that is more efficient and more effective to ensure that young people have permanent homes. We'll continue to make improvements.

What we're doing is, we've added program support to AdoptOntario that supports matching children and youth with families. My ministry recently announced 50 new adoption recruiters here in the province of Ontario who will work right across the province to connect young

people to families. In addition, we're partnering with Wendy's Wonderful Kids to support new recruitments.

This is an ongoing process—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

1120

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you to the minister for his response. Our province is working hard to ensure that children and youth in care find good families and permanent homes. However, adopting children can have a significant financial impact on a family and be a potential barrier for a family looking to adopt. Families may also face financial barriers that limit the level of care that they can provide for an adopted child.

Can the minister tell us about what he is doing to support families who adopt and to ensure that all youth and children who are adopted have a chance to achieve their full potential?

Hon. Michael Coteau: Again, I want to thank the member for the question. There is no question in my mind that financial consideration for families who are looking to adopt are something that they think about, so we've put in place some measures to make sure that it's easier for families as they go forward for adoption.

Families that decide to adopt or take legal custody of siblings who are eight years old or older are provided with \$1,035 for each child per month. In addition to that, we're providing \$5,000 to families that provide customary caregiving to children from indigenous communities to stay connected with their communities, so they can stay home and be raised in the neighbourhoods and the communities that they're brought up in.

In addition, my ministry recently announced that we will provide support for adoptive families who have young people in post-secondary education. We're going to continue to make improvements for adoptees across the province and their families.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Deputy Premier. With the two by-elections taking place tomorrow, I thought it would be timely to revisit a question I asked the Premier on April 29, 2015.

We know from a freedom-of-information request that Pat Sorbara called the deputy director of HR in the Premier's office of public appointments and human resources on December 10, 2014. A day later, Andrew Olivier taped a conversation in which Gerry Lougheed Jr. offered him appointments, jobs, or whatever. Two days later, Pat Sorbara was recorded discussing a full- or part-time job at a constituency office, appointments to boards or commissions or the executive, with Mr. Olivier.

Did the Deputy Premier, as Liberal campaign co-chair, authorize or have any knowledge that the Premier's former deputy chief of staff made that call as part of the plan to get Andrew Olivier to quietly step aside?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I've delicately dealt with this as much as I possibly can.

I'm going to ask the member to be very careful of how he places his questions, and he's at that line that I asked people not to go to. So I'm going to allow the question and let him know that I'm listening very carefully to that—and the response.

Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, herein lies the challenge which I think you are grappling with as well, that the member opposite is presenting allegations like facts. That's what he is doing, because everything that he's stating are allegations in this matter, and that is why we have a court process where a judge, based on all the appropriate functions of a court and all the rules of evidence and constitutional guarantees that are accorded to those who are alleged to have committed—those issues get tested, and a judge will determine.

That is why, Speaker, we have the sub judice rule in our standing orders. This is not the place to litigate matters. That is what the member opposite is doing. It's inappropriate, Speaker. You have spoken to it, and I think the member opposite knows that and he should follow the rule.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I'm going to bring clarity to this. I'm referring to standing order 23(h), as opposed to what the minister is saying. So I'm very careful to make sure that I'm listening, that a contravention of 23(h) is not made, and I'm telling the member that he's desperately close and it shall not happen.

The minister understands that I'm not referring to what he's talking about.

Carry on, please.

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the Deputy Premier: I'm still trying to get answers. The people of Niagara, Grimsby, Pelham, West Lincoln and Ottawa–Vanier simply don't believe the Premier's deputy chief of staff would call the person responsible for public appointments all on her own. And if she had, why didn't the Premier cut her loose after this call was revealed a year and a half ago? She should have been furious with Pat Sorbara for dragging her office even deeper into this scandal. Someone from the Premier's office or campaign must have known or authorized Sorbara to make the call.

Does the Deputy Premier and Liberal campaign chair regret not advising the Premier to have Pat Sorbara step aside earlier? Or does she agree with the Premier and still believe, as the Premier stated while the OPP were investigating, that Pat Sorbara did nothing wrong?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the member opposite is trying to imitate Perry Mason or Columbo or one of the other characters from a television series in this House.

The member opposite knows very well that this is not the venue to ask these questions. There are allegations against two individuals who are not members of this House. That matter is before the courts. The most appropriate place for those matters to be—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's never too late to receive a warning or be named—never.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The member opposite can ask as many questions as he wants to in this House. He knows that this matter is before the courts. The most appropriate place for this matter to be discussed is in the courts. We trust the court system, and we'll let that be determined there.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This question is to the Acting Premier.

Before the last election, the former Minister of Transportation promised that the Union Pearson Express would be electrified by 2017. But after the election, the government said electrification would have to wait until as late as 2024, as a new environmental assessment is completed. That EA was supposed to have been completed last month, but it hasn't even started. Instead, the government announced another "pre-consultation," further delaying progress on electrification.

Will the minister tell us exactly when the last diesel train will run on the UP Express?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'd like to thank the member for her question this morning. I understand that, not only in her community but, in particular, in communities like Davenport and York South-Weston, there is a great deal of interest in this particular topic.

What I can tell that member—and she would know this, I believe—is that in my mandate letter that I received from the Premier in 2014, it was clearly spelled out that I was responsible for delivering on GO regional express rail, which happens to include the electrification of the Kitchener corridor and the entirety of the UP Express corridor all the way to the airport, and that consistent with our mandate from the people of Ontario, that work was to be completed within 10 years from 2014. The member knows this. So 2024 is the point at which we are committed to delivering on the full picture of GO regional express rail, and we are on track to deliver within that time frame.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Again, back to the minister: The minister, by the way, also keeps delaying progress on GO rail electrification, but the minister is willing to accelerate the construction of a 1.5-kilometre bridge that will carve a scar through the Davenport neighbourhood. The minister refuses to consider the benefits of a tunnel or a trench, as proposed by the city of Toronto, instead of this super-bridge, and it's becoming clear that the trains running along this bridge will in fact be diesel, not electric.

Why is the minister fast-tracking a 1.5-kilometre super-bridge through Davenport and steamrolling over community concerns, while dragging his feet on the electrification of regional express rail and the UP Express?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I actually don't know where to begin with all of the unfortunate allegations, I suppose, that are contained in that particular question.

First of all, let me say that the member of provincial Parliament for the riding of Davenport, who is sitting right back there, has been such a staunch champion for her community on this particular issue and all of the issues related to this.

The member asking the question would know that we conducted a town hall meeting, organized by the member from Davenport, in that community so that I could specifically hear the concerns of the community loudly and clearly.

But I find it remarkable that that member would on the one hand want to say, "Why aren't you delivering transit more quickly?" and on the other hand say, "Why are you working so hard to deliver transit so quickly?"

1130

Again, it's completely consistent with the bizarre approach of Ontario's NDP. They claim they want more but they don't want to deliver more. The member from Davenport, our Premier and this team are in fact delivering more. Thanks very much, Speaker.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Arthur Potts: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Speaker, as you know, this government values the idea that every member of society should be supported, especially at times when they are most in need. Early in our mandate I made a commitment to my constituents in Beaches-East York that I would address poverty issues in our community, and I'm very proud of the work that our government is doing in this area.

So many vulnerable Ontarians are served by the programs that the Ministry of Community and Social Services administers. Thanks to the work of our minister and our government there has been demonstrable progress to improve the supports that are offered by Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program for people who are in need. This government is creating a province where every citizen has a quality of life that is deserved, and we are giving them the opportunity to find their independence and to feel included in society.

Speaker, through you, would the minister please enlighten this House on the improvements made to social assistance in Ontario?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Thank you to the member for Beaches-East York for the question and also his advocacy on behalf of vulnerable Ontarians.

As Minister of Community and Social Services, I was given a clear mandate by our Premier to drive long-term transformation of the social assistance system. Our government has embraced this challenge in signalling its intention to transform social assistance as part of our broader efforts to reduce poverty and build a fairer society.

Earlier this year we announced that there will be no provincial clawback of child support payments to fam-

lies on social assistance. This means that nearly 19,000 families will see their income rise by an average of \$282 more per month, or \$3,380 annually, most of whom are single-parent households.

We also became the first province to ensure that families receiving social assistance would not have the new federal Canada child benefit clawed back, a benefit to 260,000 children.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Minister. Thank you so much for that answer and for the incredible work that you are doing to support the most vulnerable in our society.

We know that Ontario's most valuable resource is its people. They are the key to our collective prosperity. That's why I'm very proud of our government, that we are dedicated to ensuring all Ontarians reach their full potential through access to high-quality education, quality health care, rewarding employment opportunities and very strong social services.

This government set out ambitious plans to help all Ontarians succeed, including these investments in the Ontario Child Benefit, health benefits for low-income children, a Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy and continued increases to the minimum wage, as well as free tuition for low-income students.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Will the minister continue to enlighten this House as to how our government is supporting Ontarians receiving social assistance?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Another initiative is that our government is simplifying the application process for young people with developmental disabilities and their families applying for ODSP. As of last month, once a person is deemed eligible for ministry-funded adult developmental services, they will no longer have to go through a second process to verify their disability to qualify for ODSP.

We're introducing improvements to the adjudication and medical review process for people with disabilities who receive ODSP. Moreover, we have also introduced a reloadable payment card to ODSP clients as a safer, easier way to access their benefits without having to use expensive cheque-cashing services. Once implemented in ODSP, we will begin work to implement the card for Ontario Works as well.

This is just a snapshot of some of our improvements that we're making to the social assistance system.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Ms. Laurie Scott: To the Minister of Finance: The government's fall fiscal update is full of unwelcomed surprises for Ontarians. I for one was saddened, but hardly surprised, to find proof that they are failing to respond to the issue of human sex trafficking. We read on page 135 of their fiscal update document that, to date, the Liberal government has spent only a meagre \$1.4 million on their strategy to end human trafficking, when they promised up to \$72 million. That's not even 2%.

I was just in Ottawa last week, meeting with victims, police and support organizations, where I heard that this urgently needed funding is nowhere to be found. This is a critical issue in Ottawa and across the province and it requires immediate action, not press releases. There are victims every day. When will this government finally give up on their game of smoke and mirrors and take this issue seriously?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of women's issues.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member opposite for the question. This government takes the issue of human trafficking very seriously. We know it's a devastating crime, a human rights violation, and that's exactly why we launched our anti-human trafficking strategy in June of this year. There is money attached to that, and we are working very closely with our federal and municipal partners and other stakeholders to move this strategy forward.

As the member opposite knows, there is a very strong focus on coordinating all the services that are required to support victims and to support the victims who need services who face this devastating crime. The strategy also focuses on, of course, holding traffickers accountable.

We are very committed to this strategy. Work is under way now, and it's a cross-ministry effort with my colleagues.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: But this is a criminal issue. For months all we've heard from the government about this issue has come in the form of bits and pieces of information added to press releases. Now we understand why: There is actually no real strategy, when they made their announcement back in June. It's almost five months of inaction. Meanwhile, organizations in Ottawa and across the province are waiting to see any of the support that they were promised by this government.

Once again, how can the government possibly claim that it is acting to address this urgent issue when their own numbers say exactly the opposite?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. David Orazietti: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. This is not a partisan issue. We take this issue very seriously. We're committed to making the investment of \$72 million. We are working to create an anti-human trafficking intelligence team inside the OPP, and we are committed, Speaker, to the work that is being done through the Ontario Police College to raise the level of training for officers, with regard to human trafficking.

We continue to make investments right across the province: in Halton, \$38,000; in Hamilton, \$159,000 with their police services; in Niagara, \$140,000; in Peel region, \$190,000; in Windsor, \$162,000; in York, \$132,000; in Barrie, \$85,000; and in Guelph, \$63,000. Speaker, we're making these investments. I take the concerns of the member very seriously, and we do on this side of the House as well.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Acting Premier. Speaker, three years ago I stood in this House and asked the Premier to explain her plan for horse racing in the province. When I asked her why she was betting the farm on the Woodbine Racetrack and handing more market share to a then not-for-profit giant, the Premier answered that what I was saying was just not true.

Will the acting Premier explain why Ontario Racing is currently consulting on a 17-year funding agreement that would effectively hand over control of horse racing in the entire province of Ontario to the now for-profit Woodbine Entertainment Group, just as I had predicted three years ago?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question. The member opposite and all of us in this House recognize the importance of the horse racing industry as an economic industry in the province of Ontario. We want to maintain stability and growth within the industry. That is why we've made a commitment to a long-term sustainability of horse racing in the province, recognizing as well to maintain the viability of some of those tracks. Now, Woodbine, as a service provider, would enable us to provide for some of those deliveries.

We haven't yet determined exactly what it will be, but those discussions are under way with all the tracks and all of those stakeholders that are engaged within this process. But it's critical for us to continue providing a venue, a source, an enablement of providing some of that assistance to the racing community and to the breeders and to ensure its viability.

We are working closely to determine the best avenue to go forward, including governance.

1140

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Speaker, I've met with the farmers and the breeders who depend on a vibrant horse racing industry for their livelihoods. Horse people do not support the Premier's plan to give total control of horse racing to the for-profit Woodbine Entertainment Group.

Small racetracks like the Lakeshore racetrack in my home community are worried about their future, but they can't get straight answers from the Premier's plan because it's being developed without any transparency or accountability.

The government's first plan to modernize horse racing was a disaster that the Auditor General said would kill rural jobs. Why should rural Ontarians believe that the Premier's latest plan will be any better?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Actually, I agree with the member opposite. We want to ensure that all members of the horse racing community are engaged. We want to ensure transparency and governance overseeing some of that development. We want to ensure they're actually there prior to Woodbine as a service provider of the funding. It's why we do have a group with the Ontario racing community engaged within this.

I would like very much to have engagement of all those concerned to ensure that the viability and the use of funds are going to where they're supposed to, and that's to the horses and the viability and sustainability of this community.

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Ontario is the top destination in Canada for people to build a new life for themselves and their families, just like my family did back in 1959-60.

In my riding of Northumberland–Quinte West, a significant number of constituents rely on both the provincial and municipal governments for information they need to access various programs. It is crucial to my constituents that they can easily access this information so they can settle and contribute fully to our province's society and economy.

Can the minister share with us what programs within her ministry allow newcomers to access information so they can succeed in Ontario?

Hon. Laura Albanese: I would like to thank the hard-working member from Northumberland–Quinte West for his important question. He works hard for his constituency.

Our website, ontarioimmigration.ca, and municipal immigration websites work in tandem to assist newcomers to access various information, including how to get a health card, for example, or enrol in free adult language training programs, to help local employers find and recruit the skilled workers they need to be competitive and support local economies by attracting families and international students.

Mr. Speaker, our ministry supports Ontario municipalities through two grant programs. The first is the Municipal Immigration Information Online Program, also called the MIIO Program, and the Municipal Fund–Innovative Immigration Initiatives. Our government is committed to providing information to newcomers and helping them succeed fully.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you, Minister, for your response. I'm confident our government is doing everything it can to ensure that newcomers have the information they need to successfully settle and integrate in our communities. In my riding, many of my constituents rely on services, and it's important to them and all Ontarians that information about these programs and services is easily accessible.

I am proud to say that since 2012, Northumberland county has received \$348,000 through the Municipal Immigration Information Online Program and in the Municipal Fund–Innovative Immigration Initiatives to promote francophone immigrants and showcase services in French. Speaker, can the minister tell us how these programs are encouraging francophone immigration and ensuring that newcomers have the information they need to succeed in Ontario?

Hon. Laura Albanese: I want to thank the member again for the question.

Through the Municipal Immigration Information Online Program, our ministry has supported the development of 32 different municipal immigration websites, which have given an online profile to over 160 communities in the province of Ontario.

Our government also remains committed to achieving our target of 5% francophone immigration. We have provided funding to 19 municipalities for the development of dedicated websites highlighting services in French, and we have been promoting French-speaking communities as a destination for the settlement of francophone immigrants.

I would like to encourage both municipalities and organizations to submit proposals to the Municipal Immigration Information Online, or MIIO, Program. The deadline is Friday, November 18.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport on a point of order.

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park today a resident of Burlington, Mr. Keith Strong. Welcome, Keith. Welcome to Queen's Park.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham on a point of order.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I would like to correct my record. I referred to Randy Henning, Tim Morrison and Brad Durst from the Durham police services board. It should be the Durham Regional Police Association.

DEFERRED VOTES

ELECTION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES ÉLECTIONS

Deferred vote on the motion that the question now be put on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 45, An Act to amend certain Acts with respect to provincial elections / Projet de loi 45, Loi visant à modifier certaines lois en ce qui concerne les élections provinciales.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on the motion for closure on the motion for second reading of Bill 45. Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1146 to 1151.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would all members please take their seats?

On October 27, 2016, Mr. Naqvi moved second reading of Bill 45, An Act to amend certain Acts with respect to provincial elections.

Mr. Crack has moved that the question be now put. All those in favour of Mr. Crack's motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Fraser, John	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Anderson, Granville	Hoggart, Ann	Moridi, Reza
Baker, Yvan	Hoskins, Eric	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Ballard, Chris	Hunter, Mitzie	Naqvi, Yasir
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jaczek, Helena	Oraziotti, David
Bradley, James J.	Kiwala, Sophie	Potts, Arthur
Chiarelli, Bob	Lalonde, Marie-France	Qaadri, Shafiq
Colle, Mike	MacCharles, Tracy	Rinaldi, Lou
Coteau, Michael	Malhi, Harinder	Sandals, Liz
Crack, Grant	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
Damerla, Dipika	Martins, Cristina	Thibeault, Glenn
Del Duca, Steven	Matthews, Deborah	Vernile, Daiene
Delaney, Bob	Mauro, Bill	Wong, Soo
Dhillon, Vic	McGarry, Kathryn	Zimmer, David
Dong, Han	McMahon, Eleanor	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMeekin, Ted	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gates, Wayne	Natyshak, Taras
Arnott, Ted	Gretzky, Lisa	Nicholls, Rick
Bailey, Robert	Hardeman, Ernie	Pettapiece, Randy
Barrett, Toby	Harris, Michael	Sattler, Peggy
Brown, Patrick	Hatfield, Percy	Scott, Laurie
Campbell, Sarah	Hillier, Randy	Singh, Jagmeet
Clark, Steve	Jones, Sylvia	Smith, Todd
Coe, Lorne	Mantha, Michael	Vanthof, John
DiNovo, Cheri	Martow, Gila	Walker, Bill
Fedeli, Victor	McNaughton, Monte	Wilson, Jim
Fife, Catherine	Miller, Paul	Yakabuski, John
French, Jennifer K.	Munro, Julia	Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 46; the nays are 36.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Naqvi has moved second reading of Bill 45, An Act to amend certain Acts with respect to provincial elections. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1154 to 1155.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Naqvi moved second reading of Bill 45, An Act to amend certain Acts with respect to provincial elections. All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Fraser, John	Miller, Paul
Anderson, Granville	French, Jennifer K.	Moridi, Reza
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gates, Wayne	Munro, Julia
Arnott, Ted	Gretzky, Lisa	Naidoo-Harris, Indira

Bailey, Robert
 Baker, Yvan
 Ballard, Chris
 Barrett, Toby
 Berardinetti, Lorenzo
 Bradley, James J.
 Brown, Patrick
 Campbell, Sarah
 Chiarelli, Bob
 Cho, Raymond Sung Joon
 Clark, Steve
 Coe, Lorne
 Colle, Mike
 Coteau, Michael
 Crack, Grant
 Damerla, Dipika
 Del Duca, Steven
 Delaney, Bob
 Dhillon, Vic
 DiNovo, Cheri
 Dong, Han
 Fedeli, Victor
 Fife, Catherine
 Flynn, Kevin Daniel

Hardeman, Ernie
 Harris, Michael
 Hatfield, Percy
 Hillier, Randy
 Hoggarth, Ann
 Hoskins, Eric
 Hunter, Mitzie
 Jaczek, Helena
 Jones, Sylvia
 Kiwala, Sophie
 Lalonde, Marie-France
 MacCharles, Tracy
 Malhi, Harinder
 Mangat, Amit
 Mantha, Michael
 Martins, Cristina
 Martow, Gila
 Matthews, Deborah
 Mauro, Bill
 McGarry, Kathryn
 McMahon, Eleanor
 McMeekin, Ted
 McNaughton, Monte
 Milczyn, Peter Z.

Naqvi, Yasir
 Natyshak, Taras
 Nicholls, Rick
 Orazietti, David
 Pettapiece, Randy
 Potts, Arthur
 Qaadir, Shafiq
 Rinaldi, Lou
 Sandals, Liz
 Sattler, Peggy
 Scott, Laurie
 Singh, Jagmeet
 Smith, Todd
 Sousa, Charles
 Thibeault, Glenn
 Vanthof, John
 Vernile, Daiene
 Walker, Bill
 Wilson, Jim
 Wong, Soo
 Wynne, Kathleen O.
 Yakabuski, John
 Yurek, Jeff
 Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 84; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no—

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker. As you know very well, November 16 is a very special day for the Métis Nation. Today also marks the 200th anniversary of the Métis Nation's flag, which is a very significant moment. I believe there is a ceremony that will take place outside the House as soon as we adjourn this morning, and I encourage all members to attend.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There being no further votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1158 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Elgin–Middlesex–London.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Chatham–Kent–Essex. Thank you, Speaker.

They're on their way here now, but I'd like to introduce, from the Chatham-Kent Police Service, officers David Miller and Joel Rehill. I just finished a great meeting with them, and I'm pleased to have them here today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. My apologies to the member.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FIRST RESPONDERS

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to rise on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus and my constituents to welcome representatives from the Police Association of Ontario who have joined us at the Legislature today and to reiterate our support to them and to their patients.

It was my pleasure to meet once again the PAO president Bruce Chapman and members from the Chatham-Kent Police Service Dave Miller and Joel Rehill.

The police association is the voice of our province's front-line police personnel, comprised of over 18,000 police and civilian members of police services. The entire PC caucus believes that police officers must have the resources and tools to do their jobs safely and effectively to keep our communities and themselves safe.

That's why on his first day in the Legislature, Patrick Brown called on the government to pass an NDP bill to give PTSD support to first responders. The government eventually introduced their own PTSD bill, which we were happy to support.

The member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock has been a champion of ending human trafficking in Ontario and has worked alongside police to bring this issue to light.

Let's support those who serve us. I encourage members to meet with police officers and leaders from their ridings today. I would also like to invite members and their staff to come down to the reception that the police association is hosting tonight in the dining room.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I rise to confront the challenge that has been given as of November 8 to every person in every country where human rights are concerned. Pundits can spend years figuring out why Donald Trump was elected or even if it was a legitimate election, but our concern should be what to do now that he has been elected. Certainly the misogyny, racism and queer phobia of his campaign have left many on this side of our border feeling vulnerable, frightened for the future and wondering how to explain that future to our children.

Might I humbly suggest that we begin by confronting our own systemic racism where First Nations and all people of colour are concerned, that we examine our own policies and conduct regarding LGBTQ2S citizens and that we continue the fight for women's equality, which means child care, equal pay and giving women an equal voice in government.

Many since November 8 in our communities are feeling under attack. Racist confrontations have increased. This House, of course, must always and ever condemn such actions.

There is no doubt that now is the time to act and speak out. This Sunday, for the first time, the trans flag will be raised over Queen's Park at 9 a.m. in honour of the trans

day of remembrance. Trans citizens experience more violence, suicide and poverty than any other marginalized community.

On Monday, as we rise for a moment of silence before question period, might we reaffirm our commitment to stand strong for all those among us who, since November 8, are even more in need of allies, all those who are in need of this House and all in it to be a beacon of hope.

SYRIAN REFUGEES

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I'm pleased to rise today and bring special attention to a very important issue and a very special family who's living in my riding of Scarborough Southwest.

With continuing conflict and unrest in the Middle East, Ontario took a leadership role in opening its doors and providing a safe, new home for refugees. People across the world view Ontario as a place of opportunity, prosperity and unwavering inclusiveness.

I've been fortunate to get to know such people over this past year, and I got to meet a husband and wife just a few months ago. Mr. Gardis Sahagan and his wife, Lucy Aposhian, both from Aleppo, Syria, came to Ontario at the beginning of 2016 with their four children. The family was sponsored by the Armenian Community Centre in Scarborough. They have since made incredible strides starting their new lives here in this province. I have spoken with this family on several occasions, and it's impossible to fully express how grateful and lucky they feel to call Ontario and Scarborough Southwest their home, to have a fresh start and a chance to fulfil their dreams.

Too often, it seems, we lose perspective of the human cost of the horrible conflicts going on around the world. When I asked the husband and wife, "How is Aleppo these days?" they said, "There is no more Aleppo." Getting to know this family hasn't been an excellent reminder just of that, but also of the openness, generosity and compassion for others that makes Ontario great.

I hope that we will continue to welcome families like these into our province and into our ridings. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

FINANCIAL LITERACY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: November is Financial Literacy Month and I would like to take a moment to highlight its importance. Financial literacy is among the most essential life skills for all Ontarians to have. Having a firm grasp on personal finances is needed to manage debt responsibly, to make smart decisions and to lead a secure and fulfilling life.

Last month, I had the pleasure of visiting Widdifield Secondary School and Chippewa Secondary School with Alterna Savings. Here is something I learned that day: Being even one day late with your credit card payment, Speaker, is a black mark on your credit score for seven years. That makes it more expensive to borrow money for a car or for your home.

Knowing how to save and how to spend responsibly directly influences one's success. With that in mind, it is concerning that a recent Investor Education Fund survey found that only 25% of students feel they know enough about money to make smart spending decisions.

It is important that we focus on financial literacy for Ontarians beyond one month a year. That is why I'm introducing the Financial Literacy for Students Act, to ensure every student in Ontario will graduate with the necessary financial literacy skills to live a fulfilling and successful life.

I hope we can continue to work and educate young Ontarians on such an important matter, not only as the students today but also as the decision-makers of the future.

HEALTH CARE IN KENORA

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Today I would like to draw attention to the health care situation in the northwest, described as being "in dismal crisis" by a Kenora physician. Over the past several weeks I have heard from physicians, nurses and patients in Kenora who describe health policies that are failing northerners. I have heard about the antiquated Lake of the Woods hospital that has parts still in use today that were built shortly after the First World War and whose surgical room has tiles falling from the walls.

I have heard horrific, true stories about Kenora patients who, in an effort to free up limited hospital beds, are discharged from hospital to look after themselves until they die, but who have such advanced dementia that they lack the capacity to do so.

I've heard from a Kenora man who received a \$1,600 hotel bill after being sent the five-and-a-half-hour trip to Thunder Bay for emergency health care, rather than the much closer two-and-a-half-hour trip to Winnipeg, where they could stay with family.

These stories are not one-offs. They are very much representative of the health care challenges people living in the northwest—in particular, Kenora—have to face on a regular basis.

All Ontarians, regardless of postal code, deserve health care that is close to home. We are calling on this government to fix the health care deficit that exists by allowing patients west of Thunder Bay to be seen in Manitoba and by constructing a new state-of-the-art and fully functional hospital in Kenora. Thank you.

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Mr. Arthur Potts: A great local newspaper, Inside Toronto, recently published a story about the progress our government is making in improving the lives of new immigrants to Ontario. As Joanna Lavoie wrote, six low-income neighbourhoods in the east end of Toronto, including Beaches—East York, are benefiting from \$130,000 in provincial funding to settlement projects. This is part of a larger, \$22.2-million investment over the next two years and 117 settlement projects and 98 settlement agencies across the province.

The government initiative, the Newcomer Settlement Program, helps immigrants and refugees find housing, obtain schooling for their children, receive work and language-training supports, and connect with their new communities.

The NSP fosters a seamless transition of newcomers to Ontario through the provision of community-based settlement and integration supports, delivering a suite of services to meet their diverse needs.

1510

In Beaches–East York, COSTI Immigrant Services will be using the funding to build on a previous pilot program that was focusing on employment. Funding is provided for direct delivery of settlement and integration services, including services tailored to the needs of vulnerable newcomer groups, such as the many Bangladeshi women, and initiatives that build sector capacity and promote service innovation.

Speaker, I believe it's especially important in these times for us to acknowledge the openness and the welcome that has been provided by so many Ontarians to newcomers. I know that in Beaches–East York we enjoy the broad range of backgrounds of new and long-time Canadians, who ensure that everyone feels at home.

Thank you, COSTI Immigrant Services, for all the great work you do.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I want to share concerns about the ongoing delays in the review of the GTA West Corridor which impacts residents in my riding of Dufferin–Caledon and across the GTA. Rather than moving the project towards a decision and giving affected residents more information on the future of their community, the minister has decided to strike a panel to discuss alternatives. This is after taking the unprecedented move of suspending work on an environmental assessment of the proposed highway.

I want to share a letter from a constituent of mine that they have sent to the GTA West Corridor panel. They write:

"We are writing you as an agricultural family that is currently the largest feedlot operation in the region of Peel.

"It is very disappointing to note that the terms of reference noted on your Web page makes no reference to impact on the agricultural and your task force doesn't appear to have any representation from the agricultural industry.

"The long process to decide hinders our expansion plans, prohibits investment decisions causing us to make short-term more expensive investment decisions and prevents intergenerational planning.

"The ministry by failing to make a decision in a timely manner is negatively impacting agricultural operations in the area, an industry we thought the Liberal government wanted to see grow."

Speaker, landowners have had their land frozen with no indication of the future of their land for almost 10

years now. It's time for the minister to make a decision that will impact millions of Ontarians and residents in my riding.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Catherine Fife: Like many, I find the result of last week's election to be deeply disturbing. It was a historic election, but not in a way that shattered glass ceilings or furthered our goals of building safe, inclusive communities where everyone has the ability to reach their potential.

I had the responsibility of speaking to a first-year gender studies class at Wilfrid Laurier University the morning after the election. I encouraged the students to find their voice, embrace a cause and actively challenge the language of hatred and fear that not only exists south of the border but in our country and in our province, as well. Our feminism—our fight for equality—and our activism are now more important than ever.

Programs like the University of Waterloo's HeForShe campaign are working towards gender equity. The Waterloo Aboriginal Education Centre runs a STEM camp for girls, where they are encouraged to reach their potential. And they should be ambitious.

We need to ask ourselves, what can we do about this new world order where sexist views have been rewarded, where racists have been empowered? In my view, we must learn to be good allies. We must refuse to be silent and complicit when people are expressing racist and sexist views. We need to empower the young women in our lives to achieve their dreams—dreams as big as the presidency.

To my Girls Government group at Our Lady of Lourdes public school: We have a lot of work to do, and we must remember that we are stronger together—we must hold the line—and challenge the status quo. We must support the vulnerable. We must challenge hatred and discrimination in all of its forms. And we will honour this work with purpose and with courage.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. John Fraser: I would like to echo the comments made by the member from Parkdale–High Park.

We just saw in Ottawa yesterday the defacing of a rabbi's home in the Glebe, and we saw posters around Toronto. And in my own riding of Ottawa South, last year a mosque was defaced, and a centre that many of my constituents go to was defaced, as well.

The discourse south of the border that has gone on over the last number of months is deeply disturbing. It seems to say to people that it's okay to have these attitudes; it's okay to hate; it's okay to mock. And we're not immune. We are not immune. Don't believe we are immune, because we've seen shadows of it in the last federal election; we see shadows of it in a leadership race; we see shadows of it in our community. As legislators, as people who have a responsibility of leadership in

our communities and in this province, we all have to speak out against that. It is not acceptable. Canada—and Ontario—is a place of the we, not the me, and I encourage all members to stand up in their community for that basic principle.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I have a message from the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, the Lieutenant Governor, signed by her own hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Lieutenant Governor transmits supplementary estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending March 31, 2017, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Toronto, November 16, 2015. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Lieutenant Governor.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

AUDITOR GENERAL AMENDMENT ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE VÉRIFICATEUR GÉNÉRAL

Mr. Norm Miller moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 67, An Act to amend the Auditor General Act with respect to public contractors / Projet de loi 67, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le vérificateur général en ce qui concerne les contractants publics.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Norm Miller: The Auditor General Act is amended to permit the Auditor General to conduct special audits of public contractors. A public contractor includes any body or entity that delivers programs or services on behalf of the crown and that receives payment or financial assistance from the crown or another entity, or is empowered by the crown to collect fees for its services.

MODERNIZING ONTARIO'S MUNICIPAL LEGISLATION ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA MODERNISATION DE LA LÉGISLATION MUNICIPALE ONTARIENNE

Mr. Mauro moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 68, An Act to amend various Acts in relation to municipalities / Projet de loi 68, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne les municipalités.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carried? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister for a short statement.

Hon. Bill Mauro: Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Modernizing Ontario's Municipal Legislation Act, which would amend certain acts including the Municipal Act, the City of Toronto Act, and the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act. Our proposed package of reforms would, if passed, help local governments be more flexible, open and responsive to the needs of their constituents. These reforms reflect input we received from Ontarians and municipalities. Municipalities are responsible and accountable levels of government and, if passed, the proposed reforms would benefit local governments and the people they serve by helping to ensure that municipal legislation continues to reflect and address the evolving needs of their communities.

FINANCIAL LITERACY FOR STUDENTS ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA CULTURE FINANCIÈRE DES ÉLÈVES

Mr. Fedeli moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 69, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to a comprehensive financial literacy course / Projet de loi 69, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation en ce qui concerne un cours complet sur la culture financière.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

1520

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: The Financial Literacy for Students Act, 2016: The bill amends the Education Act to require each school board to provide a comprehensive course on financial literacy as determined by the board at the grade 10 level at schools under the board's jurisdiction. Pupils are required to successfully complete the course as a condition for obtaining a secondary school graduation diploma.

BUILDING ONTARIO UP FOR EVERYONE ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2016

LOI DE 2016 VISANT À FAVORISER L'ESSOR DE L'ONTARIO POUR TOUS (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Mr. Sousa moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 70, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes / Projet de loi 70, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The bill proposes amendments to 27 statutes such as the City of Toronto Act, 2006, the Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Act, 1994, the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009, the Ministry of Revenue Act, and the Land Transfer Tax Act, and proposes four new statutes, such as the Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario Act, 2016.

The proposed amendments are varied but include doubling the maximum land transfer tax refund to \$4,000 for first-time home buyers to qualify for the refund; providing municipalities with additional flexibility to reflect their circumstances in property tax programs; establishing the initial parameters for the Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario to improve protections for consumers, investors and pension plan beneficiaries; and making technical amendments to the Commodity Futures Act to include whistleblower protection provisions.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

WOMAN ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH MOIS DE LA PRÉVENTION DE LA VIOLENCE FAITE AUX FEMMES

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: As minister responsible for women's issues in Ontario, I rise today in recognition of November as Woman Abuse Prevention Month. The truth is, violence against women is still much too prevalent in our society. Our government has zero tolerance for violence against women. We believe that every woman in Ontario deserves to live safely in her home and community, free from the threat of violence or harassment.

Nous croyons que chaque femme en Ontario mérite de vivre en sécurité chez elle et dans sa communauté, à l'abri des menaces de violence ou de harcèlement.

Attitudes towards women and rape that are sexist and misogynistic are wrong. Myths, attitudes and behaviours concerning rape which are prevalent in our society have the effect of downplaying sexual violence. This also prevents people from seeking help or reporting an assault. This supports a rape culture which leads to normalizing sexual violence, but this is not a problem unique to Ontario. It touches every country and every culture.

Speaker, we know that the early years of childhood are pivotal to instilling positive values and attitudes about relationships. So, in Ontario, our public education efforts include tactics that target children and youth to inspire attitudinal change in young people to break the cycle of violence. Our government is showing leadership to address violence against women. I want to highlight

some of those efforts today to demonstrate the work that goes on, not only during the month of November—Woman Abuse Prevention Month—but every day and every month of the year.

Our government continues to implement It's Never Okay, our three-year, \$41-million action plan to stop sexual violence and harassment in Ontario. Over the last 18 months, our government has been working hard to implement commitments in this plan, including the passage of the Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan Act, passed by our government in 2016, which strengthens provisions related to sexual violence and harassment in the workplace, on campuses, in housing and through civil claims processes.

Our #WhoWillYouHelp campaign, launched in March 2015, continues to create discussion and increase awareness about sexual violence and harassment in Ontario and across Canada and the globe.

Just recently, we announced \$1.7 million for investments in targeted training for front-line workers in health, education, community and hospitality to identify and support survivors of sexual and domestic violence. We are also enhancing specialized counselling services and community outreach supports in the hospital-based system for sexual and domestic violence treatment centres by investing \$1.1 million annually over three years. There's also an additional investment of \$1.7 million for Ontario's 42 community-based sexual assault centres for services like crisis helplines, counselling and referrals.

I can talk about our government's deep commitment to raising awareness and to funding services, but it doesn't tell the stories of women who are finding the courage to stand up to that violence, maybe for the first time.

Let's talk about them today: women who are becoming aware that violence against them and their families can no longer be tolerated; women who are walking through the doors of those sexual assault centres, those violence treatment centres and the shelters.

Let's think about and thank the people on the other side of that door too: the people who stand ready to help them. I would like to acknowledge and support the courage of those front-line staff on this issue.

With all of those women in mind, I want to talk about our Domestic Violence Action Plan. It was introduced in 2004, and Ontario has implemented many initiatives to raise awareness of domestic violence and strengthen support for survivors.

La province a introduit de nombreuses initiatives afin de sensibiliser le public à la violence familiale et de renforcer le soutien offert aux survivantes.

This includes the Neighbours, Friends and Families public education campaign, which is reaching out to communities across the province, including francophone, indigenous, immigrant and refugee communities. It also includes training for more than 34,000 front-line professionals and service providers to recognize the signs of domestic violence and to support victims.

The government also provides funding through our language interpreter services to help victims of violence who face language barriers or who are deaf or hard-of-

hearing to access services. We support a learning network that is researching and promoting effective, professional training and public education for those working to prevent and respond to violence against women. These are some of the ongoing initiatives, and we want to acknowledge them today and to do so in this context of Woman Abuse Prevention Month.

I would also like to talk about what is new in policy and prevention. This year has marked a series of initiatives from our government to end violence against women and girls.

We launched Walking Together: Ontario's Long-Term Strategy to End Violence Against Indigenous Women and committed \$100 million in new funding to support implementation. The strategy is our commitment to work in partnership with indigenous organizations and communities to break the cycle of violence.

Today, I'm also pleased to recognize an important step in implementing Ontario's Strategy to End Human Trafficking. Last week, Jennifer Richardson was appointed as the director of the Provincial Anti-Human Trafficking Coordination Office. Ms. Richardson is tasked with bringing together survivor-centred policies across law enforcement, justice, health, education and child welfare sectors. She has both personal and professional experience with human trafficking, and I very much look forward to continuing to work with the new director, my cabinet colleagues and our community partners to implement this four-year strategy.

Elle détient une expérience à la fois sur les plans personnel et professionnel de la traite des personnes, et je me réjouis grandement à la perspective de poursuivre le travail amorcé avec la nouvelle directrice, mes collègues ministres et nos partenaires communautaires pour mettre en oeuvre cette stratégie quadriennale.

1530

Speaker, every day we hear heartbreakingly stories of women who cannot live in safety. What we don't hear are the countless other stories of women and families who suffer in silence. Their stories are never told. The fact is, violence against women can have a devastating impact.

We realize that violence against women affects women with disabilities, recent immigrants, indigenous women and women in rural, remote and northern communities differently, and that certain groups experience violence at higher rates or face multiple barriers to accessing services.

We will continue to respond to violence against all women in Ontario.

Our government introduced a new \$1-million, two-year Rural Realities Fund available to eligible agencies and shelters, to assist in providing supports for women and their children in these communities.

We are also funding the Family Law Education for Women campaign, which is helping newcomer and vulnerable women understand their rights and options under family law and how to exercise those rights.

I want to again thank front-line workers and community advocates for their dedication and the hard work that they do day in and day out.

I also want to acknowledge the invaluable and ongoing counsel provided to us by members of Ontario's permanent Roundtable on Violence Against Women and the Joint Working Group on Violence Against Aboriginal Women.

And my colleague the Minister of Community and Social Services, who will speak later this month to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, which marks the beginning of 16 days of activism against gender violence—my thanks to her.

Speaker, this government believes that all Ontarians share a responsibility to end violence against women and girls. Monsieur le Président, ce gouvernement est de l'avis qu'il incombe à toute la population ontarienne de mettre fin à la violence contre les femmes et les filles.

I invite members to participate in some of the province-wide campaigns under way this month, including the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses' Wrapped in Courage purple scarf campaign, and the White Ribbon campaign, the largest movement in the world of men and boys working to end violence against women and girls.

The Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses will be visiting this Legislature on November 28 to raise awareness about their Wrapped in Courage campaign. The purple scarf is a symbol of the courage and the strength it takes for a community to support a woman and to help end violence against women. I would encourage all members to join them in wearing a purple scarf on that day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's time for responses.

Ms. Laurie Scott: As the PC critic for women's issues, I'm pleased to rise in the House today to recognize Woman Abuse Prevention Month. I was proud to wear purple yesterday to help shine the light on women's abuse, and I proudly wear purple again today.

All women have a fundamental right to live in safety and security in their own homes and communities, free from the threat of violence. That's why marking Woman Abuse Prevention Month is an important part of raising awareness of and stopping woman abuse.

Next Friday, we will also mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, which shines a global light on this effort.

It's shocking that some countries in the world report the rate of physical and sexual violence faced by women at some point in their lives at 70%. Thankfully, Canada is a nation that is known across the world as a place of fairness and safety. We're privileged to live here in Ontario, where our police, courts and civic society organizations respect the rule of law, and where we work together to make harassment and violence things of the past.

However, one out of every three women in Canada will still experience some form of sexual assault in her lifetime. That number is astounding. On top of that, far too many women feel that they don't have the proper supports in place to help them protect themselves from intimidation and assault.

It is estimated that almost 90% of sexual assaults are not reported to police.

Our children and young women are particularly vulnerable. Indigenous and newcomer women are also disproportionately targeted.

The effects of violence can remain with women and children for a lifetime, and can pass from one generation to another. Studies have shown that children who have witnessed or been subjected to violence are more likely to become victims or abusers themselves.

We continue to see troubling incidents across our province, such as the murders of three women in Renfrew county last year or three recent unsolved sexual assaults in the London area. The issue of violence against women is real, and it needs to be taken seriously. Sadly, new forms of horrible exploitation targeting women have been spreading across Canada and Ontario. In particular, the crime of human sex trafficking, which I have worked to raise awareness about over the past two years, is now one of the fastest-growing crimes in Ontario and in Canada. Globally, this modern-day form of slavery is now a \$150-billion-a-year industry.

More than 90% of human sex trafficking victims are women, and a quarter of victims are under the age of 18. This is according to Statistics Canada. Ontario accounts for over 65% of all human trafficking cases that have been reported by law enforcement nationally and has been singled out as a hub for human sex trafficking by the US state department, something we're not proud of.

The majority of trafficking cases in Canada are domestic rather than international or cross-border. The sad reality is that young women are often exploited by their own friends or boyfriends, and it can happen anywhere. That is one of the main reasons why I introduced my private member's Bill 17 and called it the Saving the Girl Next Door Act. Increasing awareness of how common this crime has become is really important.

Just a few weeks ago, police conducted Operation Northern Spotlight, during which they charged 47 people with over 78 offences. Police were also able to ensure the safety of 20 people, mostly young women, who had been working in the sex trade as a minor or against their will. Some of these victims were as young as 14 years old and most of them under 19.

Here in Ontario, we have done some important work to stop violence against women, such as the It's Never Okay awareness campaign, but we need to continue to do more to raise awareness of emerging issues like human sex trafficking by establishing a Human Trafficking Awareness Day. While I was pleased to see the Saving the Girl Next Door Act get unanimous support in the House, I hope my colleagues on the government side will soon bring it up at the justice committee.

In closing, I want to take this opportunity to thank the brave victims who had the courage to come forward and to thank the front-line workers in all of our shelters and victim support organizations for their incredible work in supporting vulnerable women and the victims of violence. In particular, I had the amazing privilege of

working with people like Simone Bell, Timea Nagy, Megan Walker of the London Abused Women's Centre and the good people of my local shelters and centres—the YWCA Peterborough Haliburton, Women's Resources in Lindsay and A Place Called Home. These are truly incredible Ontarians who have dedicated their entire lives to helping the victims of violence against women.

Finally, I know that we all can achieve a lot working together. I hope that we will all do what we can to better protect women in the province of Ontario.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: As the NDP critic for women's issues, I am honoured to rise today in this House to speak about Woman Abuse Prevention Month on behalf of the Ontario NDP caucus.

Woman Abuse Prevention Month recognizes the rights of girls and women to live free from the threat of violence in their homes, in their schools, in their workplaces and in their communities. Throughout November, the Wrapped in Courage campaign of the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses lets Ontarians show their support for the elimination of violence against women by wearing purple scarves purchased from a local women's shelter. Purple symbolizes the courage it takes a woman to leave her abuser. When we wear purple, we are saying to abused women that they have more than their own courage to rely on, that the entire community stands with them in a shared commitment to ending violence against women.

Speaker, in March of this year and again in October, all members of this House came together to support my private member's bill, Bill 26, that will provide up to 10 days of paid leave for employees experiencing violence, who are overwhelmingly women, so that they can deal with the legal system, find a new place to live, see a doctor or access counselling. Too often, women feel trapped in the violence, unable to leave an abusive relationship because of what it will mean for themselves and their children. By allowing women to leave without jeopardizing their employment, this bill will remove one of the most powerful barriers for women seeking to end a violent relationship. It will give them the financial security they need to make this incredibly courageous decision.

My bill also includes mandatory workplace training to help all workers recognize the warning signs of domestic violence and sexual violence. This November, I call on the government to bring my bill forward for public input at committee as a demonstration of our collective resolve to end violence against women.

1540

While much has been achieved since Woman Abuse Prevention Month was first declared in this province, for those of us who have been fighting this fight for years, it is easy to become discouraged when change is so painfully, achingly slow.

According to Statistics Canada, every six days in Canada a woman is killed by her current or former intimate partner. In Ontario alone, 20 to 30 women are murdered each year. In 2012, 77% of the domestic homicide victims whose cases were reviewed by Ontario's Do-

mestic Violence Death Review Committee were women. In 2013, 85% of the victims were women. In 2014, 90% of the victims were women.

When women seek shelter from violence and abuse, they do so out of a very real sense of terror for the safety of their children and for themselves. One of the goals of Woman Abuse Prevention Month is to raise awareness through campaigns like Wrapped in Courage or Shine the Light. Prevention also means education through school-based programs and training for other community organizations.

I salute those amazing front-line staff from violence-against-women agencies who do this work, because they know how essential it is to stop the violence. But in the context of declining budgets and increasing needs, agencies are forced to make agonizing decisions. How many women and children do they turn away in order to fund outreach programs? When violence-against-women services are not funded adequately, this is the difficult choice they face.

Speaker, in addition to public education and awareness, effective prevention also requires changing the behaviours of men. There is a direct link between violence against women and gender inequality, between woman abuse and a society that fails to challenge misogyny and rape culture, even—as we saw in the US—that excuses such behaviours as mere locker room talk. That's why campaigns like White Ribbon, campaigns to engage men in ending men's violence against women, are so important.

At the same time, we must find ways to stop the abuse. We must hold perpetrators accountable to the fullest extent possible, but we can't lock them up forever. Evidence-based programs to change abusive behaviours like Partner Assault Response, or PAR, are an essential component of a comprehensive woman abuse prevention framework. Unfortunately, instead of acting on the 2009 recommendations from its own expert panel that PAR be strengthened, that it be delivered on a differentiated basis rather than one size fits all, that it be made available to abusers who voluntarily want to change, not just those who are ordered by the courts, this Liberal government has watered down the program by reducing the number of sessions available to offenders. Instead of listening to warnings from experts and community leaders about the risk these changes have created for women and children, this Liberal government has potentially created a revolving door for abusers.

So let's all wear a purpose scarf on November 28, but let's also make the meaningful changes necessary to prevent woman abuse.

PETITIONS

WATER EXTRACTION

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas large-scale water extraction by the water bottling industry can pose a serious risk to a community's long-term groundwater quality and quantity; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has mandated through its Places to Grow initiative that many communities must grow, thereby placing greater pressure on our water supply; and

"Whereas climate change and recent droughts add an additional level of uncertainty to our water supply; and

"Whereas water is a finite, shared public resource and the extraction of groundwater at a rate faster than it can be replenished can cause an aquifer to lose its ability to sustain itself; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change has a responsibility under its own statement of environmental values to protect the sustainability of Ontario's water supply;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To ensure new rules governing permits to take water by water bottling companies protect our water supply over the long term, and until such rules are in place to initiate a moratorium on such new and renewable applications and permits for water-taking in Ontario."

This is signed by at least 1,600 residents of the province of Ontario. It's one of the largest petitions I've received recently. I have affixed my signature at the top of it as well.

TUITION

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a stack of petitions signed by thousands of Ontarians to eliminate Ontario student loan interest. The petition reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario has taken the initiative to facilitate access to post-secondary education for individuals coming from low-income families and access to interest-free loans for all Ontarians;

"Whereas the Ontario government has failed to address current students and recent graduates who have been left to deal with crushing high-interest loans, leaving them in a great financial disadvantage as members of the community;

"Whereas the record-high reaching cost of education has left students with no choice but to take on high-interest student loans to fund their education—graduating with an average debt of \$28,000;

"Whereas many recent graduates simply cannot afford their monthly OSAP payments due to a lack of meaningful employment rendering them vulnerable to credit degradation and handicapped from reaching the regular milestones of life;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Stop collecting interest on the Ontario portion of all OSAP student loans and to stop treating students and recent graduates as a stream of revenue, rather, work on

helping students and recent graduates become successful contributing members of society.”

I support this petition fully, affix my signature and will give it to page Lauren to take to the table.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Todd Smith: I have a petition here regarding the cuts to health care in Ontario. The petition reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

“Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

“Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients’ access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario’s doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario’s families deserve.”

I agree with this, will sign it and send it to the table with page Charis.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: “Nurses Know—Petition for Better Care.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas providing high-quality, universal, public health care is crucial for a fair and thriving Ontario; and

“Whereas years of underfunding have resulted in cuts to registered nurses (RNs) and hurt patient care; and

“Whereas, in 2015 alone, Ontario lost more than 1.5 million hours of RN care due to cuts; and

“Whereas procedures are being off-loaded into private clinics not subject to hospital legislation; and

“Whereas funded services are being cut from hospitals and are not being provided in the community; and

“Whereas cutting skilled care means patients suffer more complications, readmissions and death;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Implement a moratorium on RN cuts;

“Commit to restoring hospital base operating funding to at least cover the costs of inflation and population growth;

“Create a fully-funded multi-year health human resources plan to bring Ontario’s ratio of registered nurses to population up to the national average;

“Ensure hospitals have enough resources to continue providing safe, quality and integrated care for clinical

procedures and stop plans for moving such procedures into private, unaccountable clinics.”

I sign this petition and give it to page Kaitlyn to deliver to the table.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas a staff report has recommended Upper Canada District School Board close numerous schools across eastern Ontario; and

“Whereas access to quality local education is essential for rural communities to thrive; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Education removed community impact considerations from pupil accommodation review guidelines in 2015 and has cut essential rural school funding; and

“Whereas local communities treasure their public schools and have been active participants in their continued operation, maintenance and success; and

“Whereas the Ontario government should focus on delivering quality, local education services to all communities, including rural Ontario; and

“Whereas the current PAR process forces bad behaviour by school boards to justify the replacement of high-maintenance out-dated schools;

1550

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“(1) to support MPP Jim McDonell’s motion to suspend all current PAR reviews until a strategic rural education plan is completed, engaging all rural school boards, school communities and municipalities;

“(2) to reinstate considerations of value to the local community and value to the local economy in pupil accommodation review guidelines; and

“(3) to engage all rural school boards, including the Upper Canada District School Board, school communities and municipalities in the development of the strategic rural education plan; and

“(4) consider rural education opportunities, school busing times, accessible extracurricular and inter-school activities, the schools’ role as a community hub and its value to the local economy.”

I agree with this and will pass it on to page Sage.

CROWN ATTORNEYS

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition which reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas all Ontarians deserve fair and equitable access to justice as a basic right;

“Whereas the former crown attorney for the Rainy River district has retired and the Ministry of the Attorney General has not yet appointed a new, permanent crown attorney for the district;

"Whereas the Premier of Ontario has said that she does 'not have the time frame' for when a new crown attorney will be appointed;

"Whereas the Attorney General has said, 'No final determination has been made regarding the permanent filling of the crown attorney position;'

"Whereas statistics show that the crown attorney of the Rainy River district has the highest case load per capita in northern Ontario;

"Whereas a temporary crown attorney from another district may not understand the needs and dynamics of the Rainy River district, in particular the ... needs of First Nations communities;

"Whereas the towns of Fort Frances and Atikokan, the Fort Frances Chiefs Secretariat, the Rainy River District Municipal Association, the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, the local law association and numerous residents of the Rainy River district have called upon the Ministry of the Attorney General to reappoint a permanent, resident crown attorney for Rainy River;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to recognize the needs of the residents of the Rainy River district and the numerous First Nations communities of northwestern Ontario by appointing a permanent, resident crown attorney for the Rainy River district."

I support this, will affix my signature and give it to page Lauren to deliver to the table.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Energy Board recently announced another increase to hydro rates...;

"Whereas hydro costs impact everyone across Ontario, especially seniors and others on fixed incomes who can't afford to pay more as well as businesses who say electricity costs are making them uncompetitive, and contributed to the loss of hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs;

"Whereas a recent Auditor General's report found Ontarians overpaid for electricity by \$37 billion over the past eight years and estimates that we will overpay by an additional \$133 billion by 2032 if nothing changes;

"Whereas the cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants costing \$1.1 billion, feed-in tariff (FIT) contracts with wind and solar companies, the sale of surplus energy to neighbouring jurisdictions at a loss, the global adjustment, and smart meters that haven't met their conservation targets have all put upward pressure on hydro bills;

"Whereas the sell-off of 60% of Hydro One is opposed by a majority of Ontarians and is expected to lead to even higher hydro rates;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government stop the sell-off of Hydro One, and take immediate steps to stabilize hydro bills for all Ontarians."

I support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Reagan to take to the table.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Wayne Gates: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas once you privatize Hydro One, there's no return; and

"Whereas we'll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals" and infrastructure; and

"Whereas we'll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

"Whereas we'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what's happened elsewhere;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come."

I agree with the petition and I'll give it to page Kaitlyn.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Rick Nicholls: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government is proposing changes to regulation 440, by way of the Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission (OFPMC), to replace the regulated marketing of 14 processing vegetable commodities in favour of a free-market system; and

"Whereas this removal of the negotiating authority of the Ontario Processing Vegetable Growers (OPVG) is a removal of the raison d'être of the OPVG in favour of an industry advisory committee; and

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the government of Ontario support the Ontario Processing Vegetable Growers' right to negotiate price terms and conditions of contracts for processing vegetables in Ontario on producers' behalf."

I fully support and agree with this petition and will give it to page Liam.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: "Privatizing Hydro One: Another Wrong Choice.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas once you privatize Hydro One, there's no return; and

"Whereas we'll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

"Whereas we'll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

"Whereas we'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what's happened elsewhere;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come."

I sign this petition and give it to page Adrian to deliver.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Ms. Laurie Scott: "Keep ServiceOntario Minden Open.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services has announced it is closing the ServiceOntario centre in the town of Minden; and

"Whereas the community has several businesses, including automobile dealerships, that face increased costs and inconvenience to their customers if they lose direct access to a local ServiceOntario centre; and

"Whereas closing Minden's ServiceOntario centre would cause unnecessary hardship to young families and seniors who do not have Internet access or transportation to attend a ServiceOntario location outside of the community; and

"Whereas the government has provided no information or a business case to support its sudden decision;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Government and Consumer Services immediately reverse the decision to close Minden's ServiceOntario centre and ensure residents of this community can access government services where they live."

It's signed by many people in Haliburton county and beyond, and I'll give it to page Will.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Wayne Gates: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario does not have a strategy on Lyme disease; and

"Whereas the Public Health Agency of Canada is developing an Action Plan on Lyme Disease; and

"Whereas Toronto Public Health says that transmission of the disease requires the tick to be attached for 24 hours, so early intervention and diagnosis is of primary importance; and

"Whereas a motion was introduced to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario encouraging the government to adopt a strategy on Lyme disease, while taking into account the impact the disease has upon individuals and families in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to develop an integrated strategy on Lyme disease consistent with the action plan of the Public Health Agency of Canada, taking into account available treatments, accessibility issues and the efficacy of the currently available diagnostic mechanisms. In so doing, it should consult with representatives of the health care community and patients' groups within one year."

I agree with the petition and I'll give it to our page.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BURDEN REDUCTION ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR L'ALLÈGEMENT DU FARDEAU RÉGLEMENTAIRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 15, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 27, An Act to reduce the regulatory burden on business, to enact various new Acts and to make other amendments and repeals / Projet de loi 27, Loi visant à alléger le fardeau réglementaire des entreprises, à édicter diverses lois et à modifier et abroger d'autres lois.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate. I recognize the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate today on Bill 27. I'd like to tell you that I'm sharing my time today, Speaker. I'll be sharing my time with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and also the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore.

I think a lot of people bring a lot of experience to this House. They come from a variety of walks of life and professions. But a lot of people bring a business background when they come to Queen's Park, when they decide that they want to enter the world of business—or they come from the world of business, but they want to enter the world of politics. Often they bring the experience that they've had in their own businesses. Certainly, I've owned a number of small businesses in my life. I've started and sold businesses along the way and have had to deal with the government during the time that I was running those businesses.

1600

I think that the vast majority of Ontario's businesses want to be good, law-abiding businesses, treat their employees well and pay their bills on time. They want to be able to compete in the global economy as well. I think that the economy that we see today in the province of Ontario is quite different from the one we had 10 years ago or 20 years ago. Often, then, businesses were competing with each other in the local area, in Oakville or in Ontario or perhaps even throughout North America. The competition was with people who were close to you.

Now, I think, in business, with the new realities of a global economy, you're dealing with people from around the world who are often providing the same product that

you are or the same service that you are. So I think it's incumbent upon every level of government—the federal government, our provincial government here at Queen's Park, the regional levels of government and the local level of government as well—that while we want to ensure that we've got decent workplaces and that people are treated with respect and dignity at work and we have rules and regulations around the environment and things like speed laws and how much weight you can put on a truck—you can go on and on with the things that we've agreed would be good things to have in our society. I think it's also really important, though, for the government, from time to time, to take a look at all of the regulations that it has out there that impact on business—and specifically on small business, who needs the help the most often—to ensure that we're not over-regulating and to ensure that the regulations that we have in place are meeting the desired outcomes. They were put in place for a certain reason, to achieve a certain social aim and to achieve the sort of society we all want, including a healthy economy.

Bill 27, I think, does just that. What it does is it brings forward a package or a program of legislative amendments intended to reduce the regulatory burdens that, after investigation, after examining some of the regulations that we have in place right now and some of the practices that we have in place right now, we've determined we can do differently, or we've determined that the need for the regulation doesn't exist anymore. What we've done is that we've decided that it's time to move those off to the side and allow business to not have to comply with those regulations if we're doing it in a different way, if we're achieving that social aim somehow.

What it still does is that we want to protect the environment and we want to be absolutely sure—and in my role as Minister of Labour, one of my top priorities—in fact, Speaker, really, the top priority—is to make sure that everyone who goes to work in the morning in the province of Ontario comes home safe and sound at the end of the day to their families or to their friends. That sometimes doesn't happen. As much as being the Minister of Labour is a real privilege, there's one part of the job that's not very good: On average, about once a week, I'll get a phone call or I'll get an email, and what that will tell me is that somebody who went to work just the same way that you and I did this morning—left home at 6 o'clock or 6:30 or whatever time, jumped in their car or jumped on the train, fully intending to come back home at the end of the day—isn't coming home. Something has happened. They've got hurt at work and they're off to the hospital or, in really tragic cases, they're off to the morgue.

You realize that phone calls get made to the police and phone calls get made to the Ministry of Labour, but a phone call gets made to those families as well. Somebody finds out completely out of the blue that someone that they love, someone that they care for, someone that they said goodbye to that morning as they were going off to

work, isn't coming home or is in the hospital recovering from a very serious injury.

We do want to have those protections in place. We don't want to have damage to the environment. We don't want people who are working on the job to be hurt at work. We want to enhance safety. What we want to do is make sure that the regulations we still have in place are doing the job, but we don't want regulations in place that aren't doing the job.

Some of the things that we've done are that the Ministry of Economic Development and Growth actually sat down with 11 other ministries within the government and proposed amendments. It investigated what impact the regulations were having on business. It has done a very extensive job. It's actually proposing amendments to more than 50 different statutes. So that's 11 ministries, coordinated by the Ministry of Economic Development and Growth, which sat down and examined all the regulatory framework that impacts on business and found that there are changes that can be made, amendments that can be made, to 50 of those statutes that are just going to make it easier to do business in the province of Ontario.

But at the same time—and I want to emphasize this—they're doing it in a way that still provides protection for workers, for the environment or for whatever it was that the previous regime was attempting to protect.

It also, I think, takes advantage of some of the improvements that we've seen in technology and the way we communicate now. It used to be that you would send a cheque in to the government. You would get a stamp and an envelope and you would put the cheque in and somebody would run it off to the mailbox. I'm sure that still takes place, but there are a lot of people—and especially, I think, those who are younger—who communicate much differently. They do it by email, and they do it in a way that bank accounts can be controlled electronically.

It also allows for the submission of any documents that need to be done to the government to be sent electronically. I know that there are some departments of government and some departments of agencies of government that are still working on fax machines. You'll find a business that has decided that it doesn't need a fax machine for anything else in its own operation except to communicate with the government. If they can communicate in a different way, they don't need that fax machine anymore. They can get rid of what has become an outdated technology, and they can move on to better things.

That's some of the highlights of the bill. It speaks to transportation. It makes it much more efficient for organizations and businesses to transfer their goods. I would think that all members of the House would like to see business thrive, like to see business prosper. This is one way of helping them. I would urge the entire House to support Bill 27.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I'm happy to pick up on my colleague's remarks and to speak to Bill 27. Just highlighting again what it's doing: The Ministry of Economic

Development and Growth has introduced a package of legislative amendments that are intended to reduce regulatory burdens.

I would begin by just talking a little bit, if I can, about small business in Ontario. I think that most of us recognize that small and medium-sized businesses are the backbone of the economy in the province of Ontario. They always have been. They are today and they likely will be in the future. They continue to be the backbone and make up the majority of the jobs in our province. It is with them in mind, at least when I speak, that I consider the amendments that are being brought forward, the proposed package being brought forward by the minister.

Personally speaking, I have a tremendous amount of respect for small business. I guess that we all get framed, to some degree, by our personal experiences. I can tell you about my experience and my family's experience, and the reason for the respect that I have for small business is the way that I grew up. There was a member speaking about this earlier in the week: corner stores and how they're family-owned.

When I was nine years old, my family—my parents, my two brothers and my sisters—built a corner store. The stereotypical story: The house was attached to the back of the corner store. This is 1966, 1967 or so. The expectation was that it would be a secondary income for my family. My father would still work his full-time job, and my mother would be able to raise four kids and run this corner store.

It's remarkable what that generation did. When you think about it, we owned and operated that corner store for nine years. It was open 365 days a year, 14 and a half hours a day, while my mother was still trying to raise four relatively young children at the same time. It got so busy, of course—my father was still working this other full-time job at the time. Eventually, of course, the store got so busy that it was too much, and he had to give up on that job and then he came back to work in the family business.

The point being is that, through that experience, I have come to have the greatest amount of respect for small business in the province of Ontario and the work that they do. When you think about it, my parents did not have a pension plan. They did not have paid holidays. They did not have sick days. When you got up in the morning, you had no choice but to unlock the door and let the public come in. It's through that experience that I have garnered a tremendous amount of respect for small business, and I would say that my siblings and our entire family hold that to this day. This phenomenon that has crept into our economy about outshopping—and still, I have a very difficult time spending a nickel outside of the city of Thunder Bay, but from time to time we all do it. I have great respect for small business. Speaker, I just wanted to get that on the record because small business will be very interested in this package of reforms that the minister is bringing forward.

1610

I think it's important as well to frame that this is not a starting point for our government. There has been a fair

amount of work that has gone on when it comes to supporting and helping business in the province of Ontario since we've come to government, and even more recently—not going back all the way to 2003.

This bill is dealing with the regulatory burden and trying to diminish it as best we're able. People understand there still has to be some regulation.

The single most important initiative that has come forward, I would say, so far when it comes to diminishing regulatory burden for business in the province of Ontario is the harmonization of provincial and federal sales tax. That was not an easy decision to make. It was a bit of a field day, I would say, for the opposition. But the single greatest—as it was explained to me; I stand to be corrected—regulatory burden diminishment that we could do was that particular policy. I'm told it was thousands of pages. Some 1,000 or 1,300 civil servants ended up being off of the government books and got gainfully employed by the federal government. That's work that was done years ago.

I'm always worried that when we introduce something, people see it as a starting point in terms of the work that we're doing. But our attention to small business, to medium-sized business and the larger employers in our province has been going on for some time.

I don't mind reminding people all the time to go around and compare the corporate tax structure that exists in the province of Ontario to those in neighbouring jurisdictions. Go to other provinces, go to our neighbours south of the border and compare our marginal effective tax rate—corporate tax rates—to theirs. I always like to remind people that we eliminated capital tax. If you think about it, how many years and decades did capital tax exist in Ontario? It was actually a disincentive to investing in your business because you got taxed on investments that you made. We were looking to help them to grow their businesses, to hire more people, and yet we were taxing them on those investments. We eliminated capital tax quite a number of years ago—I forget exactly when it was that we eliminated it—and reduced the small business tax threshold by some 20%, if memory serves me correctly.

So, Speaker, it's important to remember that there's a lot of work that we've done.

Some of that background that I've just laid out may be some of the reasons why Ontario has been one of the leading jurisdictions in North America when it comes to foreign direct investment. We have been talking about that now for some time, and I know that the opposition doesn't enjoy hearing it. But coming out of the recession, post-2008, where 30 million to 40 million jobs were lost worldwide—and Ontario, as the leading manufacturing jurisdiction in Canada, got hammered the most, and of course we were an easy target for the opposition. Coming back out of that, we have now been one of the leading jurisdictions in North America for foreign direct investment. I would like to think that some of the work we've done before the announcements today and this legislative package that's before us today had something

to do with that. It's hard to imagine that it hasn't. Why else would there be foreign direct investment coming into the province for quite some time?

Speaker, there was a significant downturn, as I mentioned, in 2008. Some 30 million to 40 million people lost their jobs worldwide. Ontario represents about 40% of the economy of Canada, and we were proportionately affected by the recession. We were the hardest hit, and it affected us in a very significant way. Many people in Ontario lost their jobs. We were feeling it in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, I would say, a couple of years before in the forest industry—across all of northern Ontario.

We were being criticized back in 2007, 2005, 2008. We've heard, because people would hold up other jurisdictions in Canada as examples of where the economy was doing well, "Why aren't you doing well?" But now we see that the shoe is a bit on the other foot when commodities prices sink and we see the challenges being faced in Alberta and all of a sudden Ontario looks pretty good vis-à-vis Alberta. So I would just simply say that the economy is difficult from time to time. The influences we have brought to bear over the past number of years have positioned Ontario, I would say, pretty well.

I know my colleague is going to have some comments, but perhaps I would close by saying this, as the minister comes forward with this particular package to try and further reduce—not begin reducing, but further reduce—the regulatory burden on business in Ontario. Since the recession of 2008, the number of net new jobs created in the province of Ontario—correct me if I'm wrong—I think is somewhere in the neighbourhood of 640,000, net new jobs in Ontario. A large percentage of those are full time, a large percentage of those are in the private sector, and the wages are solid. That is all to inform and to say that we've been doing something right.

There are lots of things that you can't control but, as a government, I think it's fair to say we have put in place a series of measures that have positioned Ontario pretty well coming out of that recession in 2008. The package before us from the minister is building on the work that has already been done, and we will look forward to seeing the effects and the results of this work in the months and the years ahead.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Mr. Peter Z. Mileczyn: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very happy to sum up after the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Municipal Affairs on Bill 27, the Burden Reduction Act.

In my previous role as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development, I had the privilege of sitting in on some of the consultation sessions we had with stakeholders, where we sat down and asked them: "What are some of the processes, the permits that we impose on you, that really don't make any sense—or that you could tell us how we could do them in a much more efficient way that supports you in doing your work?"

They gave us lots of different suggestions, and those suggestions find themselves in this piece of legislation, things like streamlining the process for superloads for trucking and manufacturing companies; the issue of modernization of how we communicate, allowing businesses to do more electronic communication, electronic signatures on documents; eliminating the Bulk Sales Act; allowing businesses to use a single business number identifier whether they're filling out federal forms or provincial forms—one number, one form, just giving us the information once without having to repeat it over and over again in different ways; creating more opportunities for Canadian businesses to thrive by harmonizing our business laws with international business laws. That helps Ontario businesses compete outside of our country, but it is also one of the reasons why this is a leading jurisdiction for foreign direct investment.

We're also doing things to streamline how our public service does things: allowing our inspectors to conduct interviews over the phone, not necessarily having to travel long distances; allowing businesses to do more self-reporting, to fill out more forms online and over the Web, and using that technology to reduce both the cost to business and the cost to government.

As the Minister of Economic Development and Growth mentioned the other day, Ontario is being recognized for its efforts in burden reduction. We are being recognized as a jurisdiction which uses best practices to find ways to streamline regulation, eliminate outdated regulation and make it easier for business to thrive in this province. That is why Ontario has one of the highest rates of GDP growth in the G7, as we heard from the Minister of Finance the other day.

Madam Speaker, Ontario is open for business, and this is going to help business thrive.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I am very pleased to stand here on behalf of the good people of Chatham–Kent–Essex and talk just very briefly about Bill 27, the Burden Reduction Act.

I appreciated hearing the Minister of Municipal Affairs reference a family business. He has some entrepreneur blood in him, and so do I. My father used to be a variety wholesaler back in the 1960s, back in the good days, the Bill Davis days, when there wasn't a lot of red tape and a lot of burden. My dad used to call on the little corner stores, worked with those corner stores and so on. He had a slogan and the slogan was—are you ready for this? I kid you not. It was on the back of a trailer when he would go store to store: "Save Pennies and Make Dollars with Nicholls."

1620

I have some of that entrepreneur blood in me as well because, for 25 years, I ran my own training and development business as well, Nicholls Training Group. I travelled all across Canada and the United States, discussing and talking with various businesses. I found out that throughout Canada and even in the US, but more

specifically here in Ontario, the burden of red tape was a key burden and it was costing these small businesses fortunes—fortunes in just trying to keep up with the government regulations.

We have to realize and appreciate the fact that small business today is the driving force in our economy. They provide many of the jobs, and yet a lot of these small businesses today are struggling. They're struggling to keep the lights on. Well, maybe one of those reasons is because of excessive hydro rates, but they're also struggling because of the amount of red tape that they have to deal with day in and day out, which means as well they're working much longer hours and not making as much money to even stay in business. We're happy that this bill has come forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I noticed that the government side is, of course, doing their Ping-Pong debate today on a bill. This bill is quite extensive. I have it here on my desk. It's so thick; there are a lot of things in here. It's really an omnibus bill. Some of these things are also of course left up to regulation, so they're really not addressing a lot of the pieces that are needed in here. I'm sure when it goes to committee there will be a lot of recommendations and we'll actually strengthen the bill and make things more concrete.

But the Minister of Labour and also the Minister of Municipal Affairs talked about how this bill helps small businesses to thrive. We all want small businesses to thrive in our local communities because that's where the foundation of our jobs is. They're not going to pick up and move to the States and operate their business there for lower wages or no benefits. Small businesses are here to stay in their communities.

One way I can suggest this government make changes to Ontario legislation in order for small businesses to thrive is stop the sale of hydro. That is huge. We've heard time and time again that the cost of hydro does not help small businesses or businesses in Ontario to thrive. So if this government wants to help businesses even further beyond this omnibus bill, the Burden Reduction Act, stop the sale of hydro and listen to what small businesses are telling you. Listen to what consumers and families who are having to purchase products from small businesses are telling you: Things are becoming so unaffordable with hydro rates that those costs are going to roll over to consumers or even force small businesses to shut their doors because they can't afford to thrive in Ontario because this government's selling off hydro.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Growth, it gives me great pleasure to stand up once again in this House to speak on Bill 27.

As we heard in the debate here this afternoon and in the debate that took place here yesterday afternoon, Bill 27, if passed, will improve economic efficiency and

foster innovation to the businesses in Ontario or to those businesses coming to Ontario because, as was said here earlier today and referenced yesterday, Ontario is open for business. The government has committed to bring forward legislative changes to reduce direct and indirect regulatory burden on Ontario businesses on an annual basis.

In my riding of Davenport, many of the businesses are small businesses and many of these businesses have been passed down from generation to generation, just like the example given here today by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex. This bill, if passed, will ensure that these small businesses—the ones in my riding of Davenport, but not only those, the ones all across the province of Ontario—will not have to deal with outdated, unnecessary or unclear regulations, but will indeed have more time to focus on their businesses and on the important work of creating jobs and growing the economy.

We need to reduce the red tape to do business in Ontario. Red-tape-cutting initiatives to date have saved businesses and other stakeholders over \$122 million and 5.4 million hours in total since 2011.

We want to continue to ensure that our businesses here in Ontario continue to thrive.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'm pleased to rise and comment on the debate on Bill 27, the Burden Reduction Act. I'd like to state clearly that I support this bill because we want to cut the regulations in this province. It's no secret that there are over 380-some-thousand regulations on the books in this province of Ontario. The CFIB themselves have said the costs of regulations in Ontario have grown from almost \$13 billion to almost \$15 billion from 2005 to 2014. Thank God the government has finally seen the error of their ways. They understand there are issues with this burden that these regulations make on small business.

In two minutes you haven't got a lot of time to say things, but there are a number of issues with the Burden Reduction Act that we need to talk about. The TSSA is one, where if you're trying to get licensed you have to jump through hoops. I remember a printer in my riding who was affected—I just thought of it; I was speaking about it—who had an inspector come and shut down his print shop. He prints grocery inserts. One TSSA inspector came in and said, "No, that's no good," and he left. It was a Friday night. He needed these things printed for the weekend. This guy had to jump through hoops. He finally got a contractor to come in and put it back online. Lo and behold it's the weekend: Where are you going to get your TSSA inspector? He finally got it. That would have cost that small businessman thousands and thousands of dollars.

That's the problem with these regulations. It's fine to have a regulation, but then you've got to have a work-around. If you don't have an MPP or someone you can call who can find that contractor and then the TSSA expert for you, you're up a certain crick without a paddle.

There are a number of these regulations that need to be resolved. We need to reduce them. I would say, let's do away with two for every one they introduce.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the Minister of Municipal Affairs to wrap up.

Hon. Bill Mauro: Thank you to all who have spoken: the members from Sarnia–Lambton, Chatham–Kent–Essex, London–Fanshawe, and Davenport as well.

I guess I feel the need to repeat a bit that this is not a starting point for our government, as perhaps some following the debate on television might think. This is work that has been going on within our government, I would say, for quite some time. Work that supports business in the province of Ontario has been going on for a very long time. This is not the starting point. This is an extension of work that's been going on for years, and as I mentioned in my opening remarks, I think there is some pretty clear evidence that some of that work has been yielding some very positive results.

We have a very competitive corporate tax structure in the province of Ontario. We have eliminated capital tax in the province of Ontario. We have harmonized provincial and federal taxes in the province of Ontario. We have significantly lowered the small business tax in the province of Ontario. So as the debate on Bill 27 goes on, I hope the people who are following this debate on television and in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan will remember this is not a starting point.

It's hard to ignore the fact that over 600,000 net new full-time jobs have been created in the province of Ontario post-recession. It is hard to ignore the fact that the province of Ontario has been one of the leading jurisdictions for foreign direct investment over the last number of years. This is not a starting point. This is an extension of the work that has been going on in the province by our government for quite some time, and based on some of the numbers that never get debated or refuted, I would suggest that the work that we've been doing before and the work that we continue to do has yielded some very positive results.

1630

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to rise and speak to the Burden Reduction Act. I should note that I will be sharing my time with the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex, as well.

In my office, we refer to the Burden Reduction Act as the "trying to hit the undo button on the last 13 years" act. That's what we refer to this as, because the damage that this government has been doing to business certainly does need to be unravelled. Businesses are bound up in red tape. They're paying the highest electricity prices in North America, and while the minister talks about the fact that, sure, there's some tax help there, the two biggest issues that I hear from businesses when I have round tables in my riding are the excessive red tape and the exorbitant electricity prices. So let's just set the

record straight that that's the framework of which we're talking here in Ontario.

Businesses are struggling. Businesses are going out of business every day. We just heard about the Cambridge Towel factory that went out of business, and that's because of incredible increases in our electricity costs here that make them uncompetitive.

When this government took office, there were approximately 200,000 regulations in Ontario. That was a product of a concerted effort over the preceding eight years of a Conservative government to get it down to under 200,000. While that effort was successful, regulations began to be added again around 2002 and through 2003. That having been said, this government has added almost double that number of regulations—think about that for a minute—to 383,000. They've added 180,000 regulations to the rules here in Ontario since 2003.

They didn't even pretend to care about the burden that they were putting on businesses across the province until last year, when they decided that a lot of these regulations were dated or weren't actually serving much of a purpose anymore. This government has actually added more than 10,000 regulations per year since they've taken office. That's an incredible stat. That means they were adding just under 30 regulations a day.

Most of it is out of the sight of this Legislature. It's in the back rooms in the ministry offices where the bureaucrats are adding these regulations to the bills that get passed here in the Legislature. That's why a lot of us—when a piece of legislation actually makes it through the floor of the Legislature and receives royal assent, it's very thin on details, but the regulations are being added after the fact. And as you can see, they're being added not by tens or hundreds but by thousands when they get to that stage.

I started out my time here as the caucus small business and red tape critic back in 2011. It was actually a role that I enjoyed very much. I had the opportunity to go across the province and have these round table meetings with chambers of commerce and manufacturers' associations and people from the business sector, from the hospitality sector and manufacturing as well. I was always on the lookout, Madam Speaker, for the next great Canadian business, the next great Canadian innovator, and the barriers to growth that we have in this province.

With small businesses, you hear a lot about the supply chain and the role that trade plays in helping grow their business. We might make it here, but that doesn't necessarily mean that the raw materials are Canadian. When we would talk about barriers and competitive advantage, we would talk about many of the same things that we talk about every day in this Legislature: expensive electricity leading to cost overruns; and burdensome red tape, which created barriers to hiring and expanding businesses.

There's a reason why a lot of great Ontario businesses don't become great Ontario medium-sized businesses: It's because they can't get past that next hurdle because

of all the obstacles that are in front of that hurdle. In fact, there are about 180,000 of them. I get examples of them all the time, and I have been for the last five years.

The problem with regulation is actually twofold. It's not just the legion of new rules that now govern every aspect of day-to-day business in the province. I've given you a few stats already on the number of regulations that have been added since this government took office, but one of my favourite stats when I was critic was that the average Ontario small-business person spends an entire day every week dealing with regulatory compliance. That's a day every week where the owner of that breakfast restaurant isn't able to serve their customers or increase the size of their business. It's where that agribusiness that wants to grow to become a larger agribusiness can't do that. The people on the farm are busy one day out of every week dealing with regulation. It's an incredible thing that every week, one day is gone in dealing with that kind of regulatory compliance.

The other problem with an environment that loves regulation is that it gets into everything. I've had three businesses in my riding in the last two weeks that have tried working with the Ministry of Transportation, for instance, on getting driveways for their parking lots onto main thoroughfares. All of them have had trouble, often just getting the MTO to even respond to their request for a meeting or their inquiries, much less getting an answer, which in every case in the last three weeks has been no.

I don't think the members understand just how devastating this regulation—overregulation—is for rural Ontario. Rural Ontario is desperate for growth, and the Ministry of Transportation is standing in the way of that growth every time you turn around—right on cue comes our minister.

You know what? It's very sad; it's very sad, and it's another by-product of a government in love with red tape and regulation. Government and its various agencies begin to think that it's their role to find a reason not to do things or not to work with the proponent on a project. They should be trying to accommodate these businesses and helping them work through the process. But instead, they're slamming these hurdles in front of them, these walls in front of them, and making it extremely difficult to get the jobs done and get the progress going which ultimately will lead to growth in those communities and will lead to more people working in those communities.

Like I said, regulatory creep isn't just a function of paper and forms. It becomes a mindset through which the government operates, and it's the mindset through which this government has operated for years. I always enjoy when the Minister of Economic Development gets to his feet and talks about how we're the number one jurisdiction for foreign investment, as though the number he was using wasn't drastically inflated by Toronto's condo market. I mean, think about it: The condo market here in Toronto is what's growing Ontario. It's really one of the only places in Ontario that's actually growing. We have businesses in small towns that are going out of business. We have manufacturers in small-town Ontario that are

hanging on by their fingernails because of overregulation and excessive hydro costs.

There's a problem with doing regulatory reduction on a strict numbers basis as well. While getting us down from over 380,000 regulations is good, they have to be impactful regulatory changes. They can't just be run-of-the-mill changes. They have to have an impact on growing Ontario. The government doesn't get credit if all it's doing is removing a regulation which requires that all buggy whips for hansom cabs be a certain colour. There are those regulations on the books in Ontario. We still have an abundance of ridiculous regulations regarding the marketing and sale of alcohol in the province of Ontario, for example, that are more about justifying the status quo than they are about serving the consumer.

We also have to admit, and it may be sacrilege for a Tory to say this, that not all regulation, Madam Speaker, is bad. Over the years, the government has played a considerable and necessary role in both the environment and labour sectors to try to protect both workers and the planet. But oftentimes it seems like regulators and legislators are just trying to regulate because it's easier to change a regulation than it is to change legislation, so way too much in government legislation ends up being prescribed in regulation, as I mentioned off the top. As a result, legislators are left without a complete picture of how the government tends to proceed with the legislation that is passing here in the House.

Also, the nurse practitioners who visited my office yesterday here at Queen's Park reminded me that even when legislation is used to reduce redundant or unnecessary regulations that ministers have even stated to be unnecessary, they often go unproclaimed because they don't suit the government's agenda.

Finally, I wanted to touch on an issue that I have been dealing with in my office since 2013, and that's included in section 2 of the bill, with regard to the industrial exception or exemption—it's called both, the industrial exception and exemption. When the government wanted to remove it in 2013, I and other members of my caucus stridently opposed doing so because we had heard from manufacturers about why it wasn't necessary. Closing down some of the few remaining manufacturing facilities in the province seemed like a bad move economically.

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My concern with how it's treated in this act is that it creates a redundancy. We have the exemption currently, and I don't think that we need the redundancy of reasserting it under this act. It's a kind of a shell game on burden reduction. Reducing burden is about doing something. What the government has done here is effectively say that they're reducing burden by not doing something.

I'll be supporting the bill at second reading, and I look forward to further comment on this debate this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate? I recognize the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex.

Mr. James J. Bradley: He's going to be more positive.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: You're absolutely right, sir: I absolutely will.

It is my pleasure, Speaker, to rise today and to add to the debate on Bill 27. I firmly believe that this is something that we have to do, in order to ensure that our businesses not only survive in the province but can also be given the opportunity to thrive in the province.

That's exactly what I was elected to do back in 2011. When I had the honour and privilege of being sent to Queen's Park by the good people of Chatham-Kent-Essex, I was on a mission: to do my part to restore the once-great province of Ontario, so that it can again become the economic engine driving Canada. But how specifically can we do that?

Reducing the burden of unnecessary regulations on our businesses and also our government, which must enforce them, has been a priority of mine since I was first elected as MPP. In the spring of 2012, I introduced the Legislative Oversight of Regulations Act with that in mind. The primary goal of my bill at that time was to establish an annual registry of every piece of regulation and red tape imposed on Ontario businesses in three volumes: one listing all regulations in Ontario, which was just over 300,000 at that point in time; a second one detailing each regulation in full; and a third one listing the out-of-date or repetitive regulations that had been eliminated from the previous year's volumes. This would have allowed the public to measure their government's progress on reducing the red tape burden.

Bill 27 seeks to go in a slightly different direction, but it does have a similar goal in mind. The burden reduction bill is intended to be the first example of annual burden reduction bills aimed at cutting red tape across all ministries.

The redundant and unnecessary red tape must be continuously examined. This will not only ensure that job creators avoid needless paperwork, it will also ensure that key rules and regulations, such as those that protect public safety, are working or can be improved if they are not. Dealing with regulations and rules is not just simply about cutting red tape by removing them; there is also a critical component of reviewing and assessing the actual impact of well-intended regulations or rules that may have missed the mark.

The bill proposes to make over 150 amendments to more than 50 statutes from 11 ministries. It touches on many areas, but that's really only a drop in the bucket in the grand scheme of things. Overall, there are now more than 380,000 rules and regulations. Burden reduction is desperately needed, and industries, as well as individual citizens, have been calling for action for many years.

At the time, I pointed out that it was costing small businesses about \$11 billion every year to deal with red tape. A few years later, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the CFIB, conservatively estimates that the cost of regulation in Ontario has grown now to nearly \$15 billion. The cost to our economy is truly massive.

Excessive red tape also has costs for our government. The government claims that there are no expected costs

to implementing this bill and that it would contribute to a saving of approximately \$13.6 million to \$31.5 million. These savings would come from getting rid of redundancies and embracing new technologies. Many of the proposed measures are about reducing the paper burden, validating electronic communications or even adopting international standards.

But for many people trying to communicate with the government, it's like going back in time. By the next provincial election, in 2018, new voters would not be familiar with the sound of dialup Internet, let alone a fax machine. And it is time for our government to embrace technology that the public embraced years ago. We have BlackBerrys, and there are others who have WhiteBerrys.

Speaker, let me say that I applaud the government for this bill as it is a step in the right direction.

Applause.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you. There you go. You're prophetic. You thought I was going to be positive; you're absolutely right.

What I said while discussing my bill back in 2012 still holds true today. Each of us wants to pave the way for job creation while responsibly protecting the regulations we do need that will safeguard our health, our food and our families.

Our leader, Patrick Brown, has stated that reducing the burden of red tape will be the first of his four pillars of economic development. Ontario is the capital of red tape in our country, and that is not a proud distinction. There are many, many steps to take before we can consider this issue as properly dealt with. Bill 27 is one of those first steps.

My riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex was hit especially hard by the global recession. Since 2003, Chatham-Kent-Essex alone has lost over 10,000 manufacturing jobs. We took it on the chin, Speaker, but we're still fighting. Our region continues to work hard to keep existing jobs and attract new ones in the face of growing challenges that are making Ontario less competitive for businesses. I truly believe that much more needs to be done when it comes to addressing our economy to create a competitive business environment right here in Ontario, and I will continue to raise concerns on behalf of my residents and businesses.

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce also believes that more needs to be done to create an environment that is conducive to job creation. Of course, the Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce shares the opinion that red tape is placing a heavy burden on our businesses and making it tougher for them to survive and thrive in Ontario. One of the chamber's main recommendations is creating a concierge service to help businesses navigate government regulations and training requirements. It would be fantastic to see this service fully implemented across the province.

Chamber CEO Allan O'Dette also called on the province to adopt a crowd-sourced approach to regulatory change where the public could submit components and suggest changes to the regulations that impact them—a

common-sense approach. To the government's credit, they have begun this process and initiated a Red Tape Challenge. I commend the government for doing that. Individuals were able to submit their thoughts on how we can cut unnecessary red tape to save businesses time and money as well as modernize regulations to better protect consumers, employees and the environment.

Time will tell how successful this initiative is. It's one thing to hear from people; it's another thing to actually do what the people are calling for. As others in the PC caucus have noted, Bill 27 doesn't go far enough. We had hoped to see something more comprehensive, given that the government has poured resources into initiatives, reviews and challenges aimed at red tape, as I've mentioned already. There have been some encouraging signs. We were hopeful that this bill would tackle more red tape than the low-hanging fruit. But it's clear that much more action is needed. One positive element is that the government has acknowledged that this bill is only a small step in the right direction. Imagine a Conservative saying "right." I have a hard time imagining that the Liberal government would say "right"; they would probably say "left."

However, I digress. So let me say it again: One positive element is that the government has acknowledged that the bill is a small step in the right direction and has stated that there will be annual bills to tackle the problem of red tape. Hopefully that means that each year we can listen to those dealing with red tape day in and day out and, more importantly, implement their recommendations to allow Ontario to work smarter. We need to chip away at the mountain of red tape faster than it can grow.

Perhaps the most impactful thing to do would be to stop implementing knee-jerk regulations that have not had proper scrutiny and input from those that will have to deal with them. The first step to getting yourself out of a hole is to stop digging. That said, Bill 27 is a good bill for Ontario, and it's one that I will be supporting at second reading.

1650

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I've enjoyed this whole part of the debate. I will be talking about the professional engineers of Ontario in my next two minutes, but I want to talk about hydro, because it's been raised by both parties. Let's be clear: The Liberal Party position on hydro is sell, sell, sell—60%. We know their position. It's clear; it's very clear.

What isn't so clear is the PC position, including in the last—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I see the member from Davenport. Is there a point of order?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Yes, Madam Speaker. Point of order: I would just like to remind the member opposite that what we're debating here today is Bill 27. Perhaps he can address his comments to the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay, I'm going to let him do—

Mr. Wayne Gates: I believe I am, because—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): No, no. I'm standing; you're going to sit.

I'm going to listen to the rest of his preamble, and we'll rule on that.

Mr. Wayne Gates: What isn't clear is the PC position. Two years ago, Tim Hudak had a white paper on selling off Hydro One that talked about selling 49% of hydro. The only party that has been clear, that has said, "Don't sell Hydro One," is the NDP. We have said, "No, no, no."

But here's what's interesting about hydro, and what's important: The Ontario residents, who didn't have a chance to vote on the Hydro One sell-off—85% of the residents of Ontario are saying no to selling off Hydro One. That's the truth. Three hundred municipalities have voted, "Don't sell off Hydro One." This is what's going on.

When you have a bill come forward like this, that's fine. Take a look at regulations. But the biggest crisis in the province of Ontario today is Hydro One. And what's the effect of it? It affects seniors and families. They have to choose between paying their hydro bill or having their medicine or feeding their children or feeding themselves. In the province of Ontario, this is wrong, and I'll—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Once again, as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Growth, I'm very pleased to stand up here today to once again add some light to this particular bill. But before I do, I did want to acknowledge someone who's here in the members' gallery: Howard Brown, a great advocate for the engineering professionals that we have here in Ontario. I want to welcome here to the debate this afternoon—and it's the engineers specifically that I wanted to talk about.

We heard some discussion over across the floor. I know that we heard the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex say that we are on the right track with this particular bill. You used the word "right," the right direction. It hurt you a little bit to say that, but you were able to get those words out, and I wanted to thank you for that.

But I did want to address the issue that was brought up with regards to the industrial exception in the Professional Engineers Act. We are, indeed, maintaining that so that businesses have more flexibility in hiring non-engineers to practise engineering if the work is done on machinery or equipment for their employer. Madam Speaker, there are 28 North American jurisdictions that have similar policies. It's important that here in Ontario, if we want to remain globally competitive, we take every possible measure to compete.

We recognize that engineering is an essential profession in Ontario and for its growing economy. I have many friends and I have family members who are engineers. This is especially true in the manufacturing and high-tech sectors. Recently, we passed Bill 6, the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, which

recognizes the important roles that engineers play in the design and construction of major infrastructure projects.

Retaining this particular exception, the industrial exception in the PEO act, will allow businesses to designate employees other than engineers to perform minor alterations to industrial equipment where it is only for on-site use. Madam Speaker—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I've got only two minutes and I've got so much that I'd like to say. I would like to commend the members from Prince Edward–Hastings and Chatham–Kent–Essex. I've got a number of comments here. I'm probably going to be here the rest of the afternoon, so I'm probably going to get through them.

As far as regulations, I spoke already about the 380,000 regulations. This is what's driving up the cost of business in Ontario. I'm glad that the government, late to the game, has finally recognized this. They're moving on this with this bill. The high cost of doing business in Ontario: Businesses already are running as lean as possible, so when you have to put one staff member a week to do regulations—I remember meeting with someone when I first came here. He was from up north. I can't imagine what he must be facing now—maybe they're not even running—but he had to fill out regulations for the federal government, the municipal government, the provincial government and some others. He had somebody doing about five different surveys, more or less for the same thing. Governments—federal or provincial—can never get their acts together. I don't know whether we'll ever be able to get that fixed.

The other thing I wanted to talk about was the delays that companies can face when they want to buy a new piece of equipment. They can buy the equipment that can reduce their use of energy, to make their plant more efficient, but to get approvals, lots of times, can take an inordinate amount of time.

The government seems to say, "Oh, well. Just let the piece of equipment sit there. When we get around to it, we'll come and inspect it." They might even tell you, "Go ahead and hook it up and run it, but if you get into trouble you'll have to hire a lawyer to get yourself out of it."

Everybody knows that it's a whole new ball game after last week. Regulations are going to be changing across the river.

Laughter.

Mr. Robert Bailey: And when I say "river," it's in the States. We say "the river" down in Lambton because that's where it is.

So we're going to have to look at this thing in Canada and we're going to have to look at that in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: It's really important that we do all that we can in the province of Ontario to support our businesses and make sure that they're able to thrive, especially our small and medium-sized businesses.

Without question, a big part of that is reducing some of the regulatory burden.

But really, the government needs to apply this same consideration to non-businesses. There are other members who have talked about the burden faced by individuals, but there's also a tremendous burden faced by non-profit organizations, and one of those that comes to mind in particular is literacy organizations in the province of Ontario. They are very overregulated. These organizations actually spend the bulk of their time collecting data to ensure that they get continued funding, to the point where these literacy organizations are actually forced to close their doors, in many cases, one day a week just to catch up with all of the reporting requirements that they have—data collection. They have to record the demographics of the clients that frequent their organization. They have to also conduct follow-up interviews at certain intervals of time. It's very onerous, and it's time that could be spent serving our communities and helping people.

It gets even worse that if there's somebody who comes through the door who needs help on a number of fronts, the organization actually has to pick in which regard they're going to help them. Oftentimes they can't help people with a number of issues that they may have.

This happens when the government loses sight of the big picture, when it doesn't take a step back and it doesn't ask itself if all of the regulation and requirements that are being imposed make sense. There are so many examples of this.

I think this is a good first step. I would encourage the government to take a step back and look at organizations and look at individuals who are also excessively burdened in this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member from Prince Edward–Hastings to wrap up.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'm pleased to bring some closing remarks to the debate I shared with my colleague from Chatham–Kent–Essex here this afternoon. I do thank the member from Davenport, my colleague from Sarnia–Lambton and the members from Kenora–Rainy River and Niagara Falls, who had some remarks here this afternoon.

While regulation is strangling business in Ontario—and I commend the government for finally doing something about it—they're doing the same things with regulation as they've done with the debt: They've doubled it in just 10 years. But really, the biggest issue facing businesses in Ontario, facing homeowners in Ontario and facing manufacturers in Ontario is the incredible cost of electricity in this province, which has gone up as a result of the Green Energy Act that this government brought in in 2007–08.

When the member from Niagara Falls stands up and tries to blame the sale of Hydro One, which Patrick Brown and the PC caucus have been firmly against since Patrick Brown arrived on the scene here—I'm the critic for Hydro One; I should know. While we believe that the sell-off of Hydro One will have a negative impact on the price of electricity, or push prices up, it's the Green Energy Act that has done the damage in Ontario.

1700

The price of electricity was going up long before this government flip-flopped on the sell-off of Hydro One. And do you know how they got that passed, Madam Speaker? They got that passed with the support of the New Democratic Party, who supported the Green Energy Act, which is the biggest driver of electricity prices in Ontario. It has resulted in the highest electricity prices in North America. They'll talk about the price per kilowatt hour, but it's that global adjustment and those delivery charges that are driving electricity through the roof and businesses south of the border.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The chief government whip.

Mr. James J. Bradley: Point of order: I would ask unanimous consent of the House to have Rick Nicholls give 30 seconds.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): That's not a point of order.

Further debate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: This bill is obviously an omnibus bill, so it deals with a lot of issues. Many of these areas that the bill touches on are non-contentious and are, in fact, areas that we support. However, there is a serious poison pill in this bill and that's why we're not able to support it, but I'll go through some of the areas that are supportable and I'll move into some areas that are troublesome.

In general, one of the areas I want to touch on in my speech is the growing trend of this government to relegate most of the legislation in this House to regulation. What happens when you overly rely on a regulation is that it diminishes the ability to provide scrutiny to the actual workings of the legislation. When you leave most of the actual implementation to regulation, it makes it very difficult for opposition members to provide insight, because much of the actual details are left to regulation.

Where some regulation is important to remain flexible, governments have used it, but I've found more and more that this government is overly relying upon regulation. Part of that is that they craft bills that aren't fully thought through, and so they leave a lot of room to adapt with regulations.

The areas that are important to address—schedule 1 addresses agriculture and rural affairs. This regulation is important to acknowledge that the farmers in our province provide something that's fundamentally vital to any province, which is food security. It's also known as food sovereignty. The fact that a province can have the ability to grow food and feed its citizens is fundamentally important to having a vibrant province. What we need to do to ensure that that's possible is to make sure that farmers are protected. There is an element of this bill which discusses the idea of having valuers who would assist with respect to damage to livestock and poultry. I think we need to look broader and also consider the reality that for farmers who produce agricultural produce, their realities have changed significantly, given climate change and given the unpredictability of weather. This

past summer being one of the driest ever, we've seen some serious issues with respect to produce. The growing of crops in this province has become very volatile, given the environmental concerns. So that's an area that this bill doesn't touch on, but the general premise to provide protection is important.

Schedule 2 addresses the Ministry of the Attorney General. The reason why I want to touch on this is that the bill opens up this schedule to address the ministry in general, and given recent concerns about the justice system, I think it's important that we address some key concerns.

One is, we've seen far too many cases that are thrown out, that are dismissed because of a charter challenge due to unreasonable delay. While I absolutely support the charter-protected right to have a trial within a reasonable time, it's fundamental in a democracy that trials are heard on their merits. People expect to see a trial heard on the actual grounds of the offence or the trial rather than a charter challenge because of an unreasonable delay. That is unacceptable. The amount of delay that happens in our court systems is simply unacceptable, and we have a very compelling and disturbing reality with respect to the inmates in our province. Many people are not convicted of an offence. They are simply awaiting their trial date, yet they languish in prison. That's unacceptable. That's something that needs to be addressed.

One of the most chilling examples of this "justice delayed is justice denied" is the Adam Capay situation. For four years, this young man has been in solitary confinement. Only recently has he been removed. That is simply unacceptable. It's abhorrent. In a just and free democracy, that is simply not the way things should happen.

We have an opportunity here, with this bill now opening up the Ministry of the Attorney General, to remedy the inefficiencies in the system to ensure that people have their trial within a reasonable amount of time. That is an area that I think we definitely need to address.

There are a number of amendments in this bill that talk about ways to speed up and to make more efficient international trade. I think that, of course, those are important things. We need to be global trade partners.

But one thing that gets lost often when we talk about international trade and we talk about free trade is that we also need talk about fair trade. There needs to be a discussion, a discourse around what we can do as a province to ensure that trade that happens in a global context is also fair, and that human rights are recognized in jurisdictions that have questionable human rights track records.

We need to ensure that the agreements that we are making are with provinces or other jurisdictions that also have protection of the environment in their mind, so that there's a truly fair trade.

International trade, obviously, is important. These amendments that apply international conventions are, of course, something we support, but we also need to consider the application of a fair trade system whenever we talk about international trade.

One of the things that I want to touch on—and it's something that's, I think, very troubling—is that this government has backtracked from a promise. The government promised to engineers—and I want engineers to pay attention to this. They were promised that the industrial exception that existed would be repealed.

This exemption creates a scenario where we don't have the skill set of engineers being utilized in the best way possible. We don't have engineers who are able to ensure that workplaces are maintained in a way that's safe, that the practices are ensured in a way that would protect the security not only of the people working at a particular facility, but also for the public.

The government promised that they would address this situation, but now they've cancelled this repeal. They are not going to go ahead with that, and they've essentially broken a promise to the engineers.

I want to point out that that's completely unfair. It's a disservice to the engineers, but more importantly, it's a disservice to the people who are concerned about safety in our province. That's something that needs to be pointed out right now, and the government needs to do something about that.

There are ways to work around the concerns that have been raised. I know that there are concerns raised in the mining industry. There are certain practices where people are able to do without, perhaps, the oversight of an engineer. But the engineers were prepared to work with the government to find ways to get around any particular cases. In general, we need to have the supervision of skilled, qualified professional engineers, but this government did not see fit to do that, and I think that should be pointed out and made clear.

The bill also touches on the Ministry of Citizenship, and I want to touch on some key components with respect to this ministry. When it comes to immigration and citizenship, Ontario is failing in a major way to benefit from the full capacity of new Canadians. New Canadians come with amazing skill sets, with training and education from other jurisdictions and other countries, but they are not able to fully participate in the society and make use of those skills.

It falls on this government to provide a better mechanism to recognize those who are internationally trained, to ensure that their skills are actually able to be used in this province. It would benefit not only that individual and their family, but also the rest of the province. People would benefit from a full utilization of the skill set that people come here with.

That's a big loss and something that this government has failed, over the past 14 years, to address. I call on the government, given that this bill opens up this section, to do something about that, to ensure that we have a more effective way to get those skills recognized here in Ontario.

1710

The bill opens up the Ministry of Energy, and this is where we can address some of the concerns around the Ministry of Energy. Schedule 10 talks about the Ministry

of Energy. One of the glaring issues with respect to this ministry, Madam Speaker, is the fact that if we want to have a vibrant, affordable electricity system in this province, then the government needs to do something about their false and failed decision to sell off Hydro One. It has to be addressed. They're opening up the Ministry of Energy in schedule 10.

This is an appropriate time to bring up the fact that the majority of Ontarians oppose this decision. It's not like they oppose it on some fanciful reason. There are some concrete reasons to oppose this. One, it does not make any sense in a fiscal or financial equation. If you look at the realities of this province, the sale of Hydro One puts us into a worse financial position. Independent people, independent legislative officers have very clearly pointed out that when you sell off a public asset that earns a revenue, it will put the province in a worse fiscal position, objectively. It just does. You're selling off something that earns a significant revenue for a short-term amount of money. That is also horribly flawed.

But this Liberal government is so arrogant that they don't see the facts, which show that this is not the right decision. They don't recognize that the people don't want this to happen, and they also don't acknowledge that when you lose that revenue amount, it actually aids in making electricity more unaffordable, because you have less of a source of revenue to pay down the debt. These are all just factual things. This government has failed not only the people of Ontario right now, but future generations.

Schedule 11 opens up environment and climate change. I also have to say that when you privatize the electricity distribution, when you privatize the electricity system, you're also going to negatively impact decisions that we want to make as a province in order to stop climate change. If we don't have full control over our electricity system and distribution, we're not in the same position that we could have been in to make changes and policies to ensure that our climate is protected. Again, this government is failing the people of Ontario.

The final area that I want to touch on—let me just make this clear again: With respect to the environment, with respect to energy, this government claims that they care about the environment. But when they're making such a flawed decision to sell off our electricity system, they're really not doing any benefit to the future of this province in terms of our climate and they're not doing any benefit to the future of this province when it comes to energy.

Now, it's important to point out that the Conservatives like to mention the Green Energy Act again and again as the sole reason why we're in this predicament when it comes to energy. Madam Speaker, to make it absolutely clear, it was the privatization of electricity generation that opened the door to creating the problems that we're in right now. It was the privatization that was begun by the Conservatives and continued by the Liberals that puts us in this current position where we have such a flawed electricity system. It is these two decisions. Everything

else can be improved, but these two massive decisions are causing the massive problem. There are other things that can be improved, but there is no way you can make a logical argument that the privatization isn't the bulk of the reason why we're in the position we're in right now. There's no argument that can hold water, that says otherwise.

The other area that I want to touch on and the final piece I want to address is schedule 16, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, and in particular, this schedule touches Ontario Place. We've asked a number of questions with respect to this issue. We've asked the government numerous times what is their intention with the amendment that they put in, which says very clearly that it gives the Ontario Place Corp. the ability for "development, acquisition, construction, operation, maintenance and management powers." The language of this amendment opens up the door to privatization. It's a direct result of this language that we've asked the question in this House and said, "Is this government going to privatize?" Members of the government—are they going to sell off Ontario Place to develop condos or for some other private purpose? The reason why we brought this up is because it's very clear that the people of Toronto and the people of Ontario want Ontario Place to remain a public place; that we need public places to ensure a vibrant society.

Here's the problem, Madam Speaker. Members of the government will say, "Oh, no, we've already clarified that this is going to remain public." That's exactly what we heard when it came to Hydro One. Our leader, Andrea Horwath, asked questions with respect to Hydro One and asked the Premier directly, "Are you planning to sell off Hydro One? It looks like you're selling it off." The Premier directly responded that she was not going to do that. But, as you know, in fact the Liberals did sell off Hydro One and are continuing to sell it off and are going to sell off 60% of it. You would understand, Madam Speaker, why we're somewhat concerned and a little dismayed when the government says on the one hand, "We're not going to sell it off. We're not going to privatize it"—sure, I understand that they're saying that, but the bill includes an amendment that makes it very clear that they're opening up the door to privatization. You would understand why we're concerned.

I want to make this very clear: We need public spaces in any society, in any province, in any city. Public spaces are where communities grow, where they develop, where they come together. It's particularly important when a public space is in such a vital and crucial location. The lakeshore in Toronto—there's a limited amount of space; there's a limited lakeshore, naturally. When it comes to any shoreline, there's limited space. It's more finite than other areas. We want to ensure that the public has access to this beautiful lakeshore, that the public has access to these beautiful spaces. Beautiful spaces inspire creativity, inspire artists, inspire music, inspire thinking and allow for communities to come together to enjoy life. These are things that we want to encourage and support.

The government needs to be clear on this. They need to remove this amendment, remove this language so that we're not only consoled with their words, but we're actually given confidence by their actions.

Right now, the government is saying that they're not going to sell it off, but they're still allowing that door to be opened. We want that door to be closed firmly because we know the people of this province want this space to remain public. We support that, and we will fight hard for it.

I want to just go over some of the history and why it's so important that we remain absolutely clear on this. The government has been very unclear, if you look at their track record. When the government closed down Ontario Place in February 2012, immediately afterwards the government took certain steps that would lead one to believe that their intention was to privatize this land—to make this land not for the public, but for private interests. The government announced plans in March for a casino and suggested that Ontario Place might be the spot. I know they resiled from that position, but let's look at their track record. Initially, they said that there was going to be a casino and that Ontario Place might be the spot for it. Afterwards, they looked at considering, potentially, condos there. It was due to the tremendous work of one of our colleagues, the past MPP Rosario Marchese, and the tremendous work of city councillors like Mike Layton from Ward 19 who fought against this idea of having a casino there, who fought against this idea of taking this public space and making it private so that people could not enjoy it. They were successful in putting pressure on this government in the riding of Trinity-Spadina. Mr. Marchese was able to mobilize people. Mike Layton did tremendous work. Eventually, we got to the point, in 2014, where the Premier of this government finally said, "No, let's make it clear. This place is not for sale."

But, again, you know why we're a little apprehensive about those types of promises: We heard those promises when it came to Hydro One. So although we hear that the Premier is saying this now, look at the track record of wanting this to be for condos, of setting up a panel that was comprised of individuals suggesting that the space be used for condominium development, suggesting this place be used for casinos, and then going back on that decision and saying, "No, we're going to keep it public," which is good, —but then having legislation that uses that same language of privatization again. That's why we're particularly concerned.

I also want to give a shout-out to Ken Greenberg for his great work in pushing for keeping this space public, as well as to, of course, our member Cheri DiNovo for her tremendous work.

Let's make it clear: New Democrats support public spaces. We support keeping Ontario Place public.

1720

Finally, schedule 17 touches on the Ministry of Transportation. There's a number of amendments that are supportable, particularly talking about e-bikes and some

rules around flashing lights. Listen, while we are talking about the Ministry of Transportation and e-bikes, this is an appropriate time to talk about bicycle infrastructure in general.

As a province—as a city, the city of Toronto—it is the future of urban centres to have more and more bicycle lanes, to make bicycling more friendly, more accessible. The way you do that is to build infrastructure. You need to make it so that riding a bicycle is safe in a city. We know that other jurisdictions have done it. We have some of the lowest per capita spending and funding with respect to bicycling infrastructure in this province and in the city, so we need the government to show leadership and be meaningful about creating that infrastructure. The way to do that is by investing in bicycle infrastructure in the city and in this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I'm pleased to rise in response to the comments from the member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton. Clearly he studied the legislation carefully and went through it quite a bit. I'm a little bit disappointed, though, that he didn't really touch upon the fact that this legislation amends 50 statutes, to eliminate hundreds of different regulations, which will make it easier for businesses to thrive in this province.

He did mention the changes to business law that would align Ontario law with international business law, which is one of the reasons why Ontario is attracting so much foreign direct investment.

Unfortunately, he did perhaps misunderstand some of the issues around Ontario Place. I can tell this House that when it came to a fight against a casino at Ontario Place, I fought the casino at Ontario Place as well, and perhaps the member should know that, as did the majority of Toronto councillors. It was a Toronto council decision which the previous government had said would be a Toronto council decision, not a provincial government decision. I might also add that this Premier, our current Premier, Kathleen Wynne, has certainly taken a different approach to gaming in Ontario than perhaps the previous holder of that office did.

I'm very proud as a Torontonian that the province of Ontario will, for the first time since Ontario Place was created in the 1970s, open up Ontario Place as a year-round park where you don't have to pay admission to enter, where the waterfront trails will be open year-round to all visitors and residents of Toronto. That is our vision for Ontario Place, and our vision for Ontario is a place where business can thrive with less regulation.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to rise and provide some questions and comments for the previous speaker, my colleague from Bramalea—Gore—Malton. I appreciated the fact that he focused a great deal on the Attorney General file. There is a lot of stuff going on there right now with access to justice. Justice delayed is justice denied.

We heard a very disturbing story as recently as yesterday from Ottawa, and I think there are some opportunities for improvement, I believe, is what my teachers used to call it—in this bill, in the role of the Attorney General and how we can improve access to justice for all Ontarians on both sides, whether you are a victim of a crime or someone who is accused. I'm glad that was raised today as part of the Burden Reduction Act, Bill 27.

There are some positive updates and amendments that are being brought forward, but I wouldn't want people to twist themselves into a pretzel to think that they have solved all of the red tape issues that we have currently in Ontario and facing small business and individuals who try to work and make a living in Ontario. There are many more opportunities—many of them, quite frankly, that I hear when I visit small businesses, when I go to manufacturing firms. After the cost of electricity, the cost of power, the next thing that is raised by our job creators is always red tape, how much there is and how it impacts their ability to make a living and to create jobs. So let's not think that Bill 27 is the finish. It is the beginning, and good steps.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I just want to touch on one of the comments that was made earlier by one of my colleagues: 90% of the PC caucus supported the white paper on selling off Hydro One. I want that to be clear. They can stand up and say whatever they want, but check the record.

Then I want to talk about Bill 27. Professional Engineers Ontario, PEO, is dismayed by the repeal of the reversal of the industrial exemption proposed in schedule 2. Now think about that. Then I go over to another page and it includes a cancellation of the repeal of clause 12(3)(a) of the Professional Engineers Act, commonly known as the industrial exemption.

The exemption allows—now think about this. Madam Speaker, you'll be interested in this, I know. The exemption allows unlicensed employees to design and/or modify production machinery or equipment used to make a product in the employee's facility—unlicensed. It didn't say "minor adjustments" anywhere, like one of my colleagues from the Liberal Party said; it says they can make design and modification. This is opposed by Professional Engineers Ontario.

With my last 30 seconds, what I'd like to do—because I actually respect some of the work that the labour minister does. I think he's passionate, and he showed some of that passion, quite frankly, when attacking the PCs this morning and their leader. But what he said today was, very clearly, that safety is priority one in the province of Ontario. So I ask everybody here, how can safety be priority one while having unlicensed employees do design modifications to equipment—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I am shocked and disappointed to see a member from the city of Mississauga devote so

much of what should be a discussion on some important issues in this province to advocating the same stance taken by the Conservatives years ago in advocating against the very people who sent him here—and to contemptuously leave Mississauga residents fuming in traffic and dealing with congestion that just grows worse and worse every year, in his attack on the plan to get more value out of some of the assets that we already own and control and will continue to own and control through the privatization of Hydro One.

He is either proposing doing nothing—which, of course, is the standard NDP approach: when in doubt, just do nothing—or he's advocating higher taxes or he's saying we need to do more borrowing or he's saying we need to cannibalize our public services. This government has said loud and clear that we should find value in those assets that we already own, assets we can continue to own, assets we will continue to control, and in so doing, free up some money to improve transit, to enable more people to leave their car at home, to take transit to get to a GO station, to take transit to be able to get around our 905 region or to get into the city of Toronto. That's the thing people want to do. That's the kind of solution they are looking for. And that's why this proposal is one that, if you live in the city of Mississauga, is going to make it easier and more convenient for you to ride transit, to be able to leave that car at home, to get to more places, to get to them in a timely fashion, to take some of the congestion off our roads and to do so in a manner that will allow us to continue to control and manage the resource that transmits electricity in this province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton to wrap up.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'll be very brief with responding to some of the members. Particularly, I don't have to go very long with the Mississauga—Streetsville member because the argument was so weak and so inherently flawed. Everyone in this province knows that selling off an asset that generates a revenue is not the way to build infrastructure in this province. That does not work. No one believes that. That's such a weak argument.

But I do want to go on and say that I want to thank the member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore for clarifying. I did not know that he was also involved in the fight against the casino, so I salute him for his tremendous work.

1730

I also want to acknowledge the member from Dufferin—Caledon for also highlighting how important it is for us to work on access to justice. The member has done a lot of work on that issue, and I want to salute her work and her advocacy around access-to-justice issues and the fact that she pointed that out in the speech.

The member from Niagara Falls—what can we say?—speaks with a lot of passion. He also touched on the importance of ensuring that our manufacturing industries are protected by the services of trained, qualified and licensed professional engineers. So I wanted to acknowledge that, as well.

Listen, at the end of the day, we have a piece of legislation that will have some lukewarm benefits for the province. But there are some significant problems with the privatization of Ontario Place. We've had problems with this government promising one thing and then doing something completely different. As a result of our apprehension with respect to this problem that this government has with privatization in the face of the public not wanting it, we are not going to support this bill. We are going to stand up for the people of this province when they want public spaces in this city and in this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm delighted to be here in the Legislature this afternoon and to have an opportunity to add my voice to the debate around Bill 27, known as the Burden Reduction Act.

I did have a chance to listen to a number of the other members of the Legislature—government members and opposition members—providing their commentary on the bill. There's a lot of ground that I want to cover, and this is a very important and fundamental bill with respect to making sure that Ontario's economy continues to perform, as we go forward, as strongly as it has performed over the last number of years because of some very important and crucial decisions that have been made by the Ontario government. But before I delve right into some of those elements of this particular legislation, I think it is important to recognize—we heard the member from Mississauga—Streetsville and others on this side of the House talking about some of those very fundamental decisions that our government has made and the benefits that a strong and performing economy can provide, cutting across so many different sectors.

I'm always fond, of course, given my role not only as the MPP for Vaughan but also as the Minister of Transportation, of talking about how ambitious our transportation plan is in terms of our infrastructure build-out. And while I know Bill 27 is not about that specifically, it really and truly is, at its core, at its essence, about making sure that the economy is prosperous, that the economy is effective and efficient, that it is producing and creating jobs, that it is producing a more productive workplace, that it's helping to make sure that people across the province, whether you're my age or whether you're a little bit older or as young as my nine-year-old and five-year-old daughters at home, are looking forward hopefully—and I am a hopeful person, Speaker—to an economically bright future, regardless of who you are. At the end of the day, you require a strong economy that is functioning, that is performing and that is prosperous and productive in order to continue to make the investments that are so crucial. It's a complementary or symbiotic relationship between that strong economy and the infrastructure that you're able to invest in—because the economy is performing and, at the same time, our infrastructure requires ongoing and consistent investment in order to make sure that our economy is strong.

Of course, the member from Mississauga—Streetsville did reference, largely in response to what has been heard from members of the opposition around some of the leadership, some of the decisions that our government has made around assets that required an unlocking or an optimization in order to make sure that we had the fuel that's needed to ensure that our infrastructure is being built—which, again, as a spinoff benefit, helps the economy. Well, the member from Mississauga—Streetsville is 100% right: Each of the decisions that we're making related to all of the economic and quality-of-life issues that confront a government in this day and age are all about making sure that we continue to have that opportunity to build transit and transportation infrastructure, and other forms of infrastructure: education, health care and so much else. We wouldn't be able to do that unless the economy was performing strongly.

Bill 27 is, effectively, a multi-faceted approach to make sure that the economy continues to hum, that it continues to move.

The member from Mississauga—Streetsville, the member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore; the member from Davenport, the member from Brampton West, of course the member from Richmond Hill, the member from Ottawa South—every single person on the government side of the Legislature, and every one of our communities, understands how important it is, when you think, just for a quick second, of current estimates with respect to how much economic productivity is lost in a region like the greater Toronto and Hamilton area because of gridlock. We're talking about a number that now trends towards \$11 billion a year, each and every year. That's a big number. It's a big number. But it's a number that's compounded by the quality-of-life impact, when you think about how much more time you spend in your car today, if you're travelling by car in this region, versus a number of years ago. I point that out because there is definitely a quality-of-life impact that's not positive. Because we know we require more, we require more of those investments.

Again, I just want to stress the importance of making sure that the economy of Ontario is firing on all cylinders, as it has been now for a number of years because of the leadership of our government, because of the leadership of our Premier, Kathleen Wynne, and so many others on this side of the House, in particular since the great recession of 2008–09. The investments that have been made in infrastructure, the decisions that we've embarked upon because of the desire to make sure that our economy continues to be strong, are actually producing results. Our Minister of Economic Development and Growth is someone who—he was speaking at a public podium in the Toronto area earlier today. He talked about exactly how much economic progress we've made over the last number of years, the number of jobs that have been created, the percentage of those jobs—the overwhelming percentage of those jobs, Speaker—that are both full-time and pay well.

Often I think inside government we're all guilty to an extent of surrendering to jargon, surrendering to statistics

and numbers. But when you look at things like the job numbers, when you see on a consistent basis how they are performing well, how they look good, you have to kind of pierce that notion that we're just talking about big numbers. The numbers are big and they are consistently positive. But we're not talking about thousands of jobs only. What we're really talking about, Speaker, are thousands of individuals and, more importantly, thousands of families in every corner of the province who actually have the opportunity, because the economy is performing, because both our partners in the private sector and our partners in labour, for example, are all working together collaboratively with this government on the decisions that we're making so that they continue to have opportunity—that they continue to have not only the job but the benefits that flow from a job so they can support themselves, support their families, support their neighbourhoods and their communities.

Fundamentally, Speaker, not only is that how you build an economy but that's how you build a sustainable province. And that's the work that I know our Premier and our Minister of Economic Development and Growth and our Minister of Finance and every single member on the government side of this chamber are focused on. When you look at some of the key elements of this particular legislation, of Bill 27, the Burden Reduction Act, you see—I mean, I'll just point out a couple because I think it's important to make sure people know that this is a bill that is literally full of extraordinary measures that will help as we continue to go forward. For example, a couple of highlights: The bill will allow provincial inspectors, under the Consumer Protection Act, to request information through phone calls or emails instead of face-to-face meetings, leading to fewer interruptions to business—just one example, one that actually relates to work that MTO does, something I've certainly heard about over the last nearly two and a half years, since I was first appointed to serve as the Minister of Transportation, particularly from members of the Legislature who represent northern communities.

Not only northern communities, but I've heard a lot of the feedback from our northern members about what we call the superload vehicle permits, the oversize and overweight permits that are required given a certain size of vehicles on the road—unique or unusual, I guess, or exceptional permits that are needed because of the impact these vehicles might have on our roads and highways. This bill, Bill 27, includes provisions that would help streamline the delivery, Speaker, of what we call these superload or oversize/overweight vehicle permits, making it easier and more efficient for businesses shipping heavy machinery and other goods to secure the proper certification. It sounds in the course of legislative debate like something that might seem to one watching at home as relatively insignificant, perhaps not that important. But I can tell you that in every corner of the province there are various private sector partners who have spoken to us about how much more they could achieve in terms of their exports, in terms of getting their

goods to customers and, again, making sure, as a result of that work, that the economy continues to flow and perform well, how they have reached out to us on a number of occasions and asked for help with respect to streamlining that permitting process. This bill listened in that regard and in so many other regards, and it has responded in a specific way.

1740

A couple of other things: The proposed changes support the Business Growth Initiative that is helping to grow the province's economy and create jobs by promoting an innovation-based economy, helping small companies scale up and modernize with respect to the regulations for business.

In the recent fall update that was provided to the federal House of Commons by Finance Minister Bill Morneau, there was a significant amount of discussion around how we can support businesses nationally, from their perspective, with respect to what's called scaling up that innovation economy. What you see here is a very clear example of how we have now, over the last number of years in Ontario, demonstrated very clear leadership on matters like this, and how Bill 27 and a lot of the other work that we're engaged in help to support and expand or elaborate on those kinds of measures.

Another example: An additional amendment is under the Public Lands Act to permit the building, placement or use of low-risk structures, such as docks, which will result in a cost avoidance of between \$1 million and \$3 million per year.

Now, it's interesting. Again, from MTO's perspective, when we often talk dollar figures, both in the Legislature and publicly, the numbers are in the billions. When you think of the major transit projects or the highway projects, such as the four-laning of the Trans-Canada in northern Ontario; when you think of the Morriston bypass, which we announced in last year's budget, which will help a chunk of what I'll call south-central Ontario in the Wellington, Halton Hills, Guelph and Hamilton area with respect to not only improving traffic flow, but also helping with the local economy in that particular area; when you think of all of these initiatives, the numbers are often huge.

We talk about the Eglinton Crosstown LRT, the single-largest public transit project in Ontario history, with a capital cost of \$5.3 billion—

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Right through to Etobicoke North.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: We talk about the Finch LRT—speaking of Etobicoke North—a project that is at a capital cost estimate of \$1.2 billion, which will run from the future subway station at Finch and Keele, just at the edge of York University, and will run westward—

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Humber College.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: —through the riding of York West, but also through the riding of Etobicoke North and will terminate at Humber College.

I remember very vividly the day that I was very proud to stand at Humber College alongside the member from

Etobicoke North, who has been working hard for his community as a champion since 2003—since before 2003; I've known him since about 1999. He's a man who now has, for 17 years, been working extraordinarily hard on behalf of his community. As a result of his work, we were able to be in a position to make the announcement around the Finch West LRT—\$1.2 billion.

The reason that I'm mentioning these projects—aside from the fact that I'm very proud of the very clear demonstration on the part of our government to make these crucial investments—is because those dollar figures are huge. When I reference something in Bill 27 that's effectively streamlining a process or resulting in cost avoidance of between \$1 million and \$3 million, somebody watching at home might say, "Well, you know, coming from the Minister of Transportation, that doesn't sound like a lot of money. A lot of the projects that he leads on or embarks on are projects that are much larger in terms of scale." But what that notion or that opinion would fail to take into account is that, for thousands of people and thousands of businesses across the province of Ontario, this range of \$1 million to \$3 million in cost avoidance is the difference between performing well and perhaps not performing so well. It's the difference between being able to invest more in your business—to grow that business, to hire more people, to support yourself, your family and your community. When I think of this bill, when I think of the decisions that our Premier and our government have made around the economy, it really is all about expanding opportunity.

It doesn't matter whether you're in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area and you're talking about transit investments that are of a significant size or scale, or you're in other corners of the province looking for ways to expand opportunity, to provide more options for people: This bill, Bill 27, through the burden reductions and through some of the other streamlining efforts, very clearly is completely consistent with the notion that, when we work hard and work together and keep our sleeves rolled up and keep our shoulders to the wheel, we can continue to have an economy that grows and expands and provides opportunity.

There's another example in this legislation. Ontario implementing the cross-border business law package, the process of Canadian ratification of what they call a number of these conventions, will begin, which will allow for future opportunities for cross-border business in Ontario. There might not be a more crucial moment, at least in the last number of years. There might not be a more crucial moment for us here in Ontario to consider very carefully, very thoughtfully and very deliberately the Canada-US and the Ontario-US trading relationship. Obviously, recent political events south of the border bring that into sharp relief, bring that into sharp focus. We know that our economy, since its inception and certainly right up until today, is fundamentally tied in so many positive ways to what's happening south of the border. We have to make sure, in our legislation and in our regulatory approach, that we continue to enhance that relationship.

When you think, again, from a transportation perspective, about how much trade crosses, for example, at the border in Windsor—I was just in Windsor last week. I had the chance to make an announcement alongside the Rt. Hon. Herb Gray Parkway, and it was an announcement regarding the official opening of the trail system that is in parallel to the highway itself. Speaker, I have to tell you, that is an investment somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$1.5 billion from government to build a highway that has literally transformed not only Windsor itself, but Essex region and that connection to the border in terms of reducing, for example—speaking of burden reduction—how many traffic lights would exist for traffic, both economic traffic in terms of commercial traffic and also individuals. The number of lighted intersections that have been eliminated to get to the border—it saves time. It's a significant, I'll call it, transportation burden reduction, with the bill, of that infrastructure.

So to be in Windsor and to hear very clearly, not only from Mayor Dilkens of Windsor, but from mayors right across that region—I had the chance to spend a little bit of time with our dear friend and former colleague Teresa Piruzza while I was down there. Teresa spoke to me very eloquently, as she always did when she was a member here in this House, about the need to make sure that we continue to invest, that we continue to invest in infrastructure, but that we continue to be smart as a government as it relates to other initiatives that we are bringing forward to help support that idea, that concept so fundamental to our province's history of expanding opportunity. Teresa spoke very highly, in her current capacity but mostly in her capacity as a very proud native of Windsor and a very proud Ontarian, of all of the different ideas and initiatives that we are pursuing as a government that she knows will help improve, in this case, Windsor's economy, and as a result keep that border moving and flowing and as a result make sure that Ontario's economy continues to be strong.

You see in Bill 27, with this cross-border business law package, again, something that may seem, to someone who hasn't necessarily thought about the larger connection to the importance of our economy, as something trivial, but that's something that it's clearly not. It's really interesting to point out that reducing regulatory burden is part of our government's economic plan.

By the way, Speaker, it's a plan that is working. By every single measure that exists out there that is normally used for determining whether or not you're moving in the right direction, our economic plan is working. But reducing regulatory burden is part of our plan—it's known, as I mentioned earlier, as the Business Growth Initiative—to build Ontario up and to deliver on our number one priority, which of course is to grow the economy and create jobs.

That initiative is specifically built on the following principles: creating a strong, innovative, driven economy; catapulting more Ontario businesses forward through scaling up; and lowering business costs through modernized regulations. I could literally spend all afternoon—I

could spend all week—talking about all of the different ideas, concepts and perspectives that will help us achieve this, many of which are contained in this particular legislation. I won't do that, Speaker, because I know others, on this side of the House in particular, are dying—they are chomping at the bit—to stand up and support this legislation, because they, all of my colleagues on this side of the House, understand the importance of making sure we get this right. We are so hopeful. We are in fact yearning for both opposition parties to recognize the importance of Ontario's economy and to stand with us in solidarity to support this bill, because they understand—they should, anyway, Speaker—how important it is to make sure that we get this right.

So I would only say in my remaining time, I will only say again—and to me it's less relevant. It's less relevant, or the sector of the economy that we're talking about is less relevant than the overarching notion, that fundamental philosophy, that it's the root of the decisions that we're making on this side of the House. We recognize—the Premier has said this many times—that when you're talking about building an inclusive province, when you're talking about building an inclusive economy, you need to make sure at all times that you're making decisions that are complementary to one another. So again, whether you're investing in major transit expansions or you're making important decisions around reducing regulatory burden or you're keeping an eye on how you can support Ontario-based businesses and how you can support Ontario-based entrepreneurs, people who are willing to risk it all to build a brighter future for themselves, a brighter future for their community and a brighter future for this entire province—you have to be smart about that. The notion of that innovation-driven economy, that notion of helping support so many Ontario-based entrepreneurs, people who have so much between their ears, as the saying goes, who want to do more, who want to compete—and we are competing, and we're winning.

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There is absolutely no reason for us not to be in a position to support so many women and men who have so many world-leading ideas around innovation. We are doing it through this bill. We are doing it because we're reducing the regulatory burden. We're doing it because we're making critical investments in a wide range of infrastructure-related sectors. But, most importantly, we're doing it because there is an approach, there is a philosophy, there is something that is cutting through the DNA, the ideas-based DNA on this side of the Legislature, starting with the Premier through to every member of our caucus, that understands that when you look at it collaboratively, you can produce exceptional results. It's most important for me in my remaining time to reference that this is why we work so hard. It's my nine-year-old and my five-year-old at home: I want them to live in a province that, as they grow older, gives them as much opportunity as Ontario has given me.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to add a few comments to the Minister of Transportation's comments. I listened very intently. I was going to say something else, but he's got me on the trade and the economics with the border, because I live in a border community. I represent Sarnia-Lambton and it's also very important, the trade corridor. He's one of the few on that side who spoke about these issues today, so I'm really glad that I was here to hear him speak about how we have to look at what's taking place as far as regulations in the United States now because of the events of last week as far as the election. There's going to be more pressure on the Canadian and Ontario governments as far as getting our regulations, our rules.

Our trade registration is certainly important in Sarnia-Lambton. We have the bridge, which we twinned back in the 1990s. We're second to Windsor as far as a major border crossing for goods and services every day. We also have a tunnel with CN that travels through there—and on the seaway as well. Sarnia-Lambton certainly understands the border implications when there are any types of snarl. Any types of issues that cause delays at the border certainly affect Sarnia-Lambton, because a lot of the trade, if it's not going through Windsor, is going through Sarnia-Lambton to Toronto and London and other points in between.

I certainly support this bill. I said there are things we want to see in it that aren't there, but I think it's a good start. I talked earlier about the 380,000-plus regulations in Ontario. I think we need to cut those—I don't know—by half, by a third at least, because those regulations certainly lead to delay and lead to burdens as far as the cost of expansion to business and opportunities.

I'll listen closely the rest of the afternoon and look forward to the rest of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to speak in this House. I listened intently to the speech from the Minister of Transportation. The vast majority of his remarks—I'd say almost all of his remarks—I agreed with. All people in this House have the same goals. I commend him on a thoughtful speech, and the vast majority of this bill we agree with. There are a couple of big problems in this bill for us, but the vast majority we agree with. But there are other areas that we could go further with this bill, and the way this House is structured lately, I might not have the time to do a 10-minute or a 20-minute because it might be closed before I get there, but I'll give you an example of other regulations that we need to look at in this province.

I have a farmers' market in my riding, and because it's a farmers' market, local vendors can sell bread, jam—the things you would typically find at a farmers' market. Great. Twenty kilometres farther, I have a community market. Those same vendors are not allowed to sell at the community market because of a health unit regulation. And you would say, "Well, are the good people of Temagami not allowed to have this same food?" If it's

too dangerous for Temagami, is it for some reason not dangerous enough for the people in New Liskeard? Those are regulations, and we work with the health unit to try to get that changed. But those are the kind of regulations that we have to look at to help this province move forward. We would love to do that collaboratively.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Once again, I'm pleased to stand in this House to speak to Bill 27. It's a wide-ranging bill that proposes to include a number of measures that would really modernize government communication with businesses by allowing for the electronic submission of documents, for example, and potentially for helping some of the constituents from the member opposite who spoke about the farmers' market there. This and another crucial updates that are part of this bill would help to foster an innovative and supportive business environment.

We are competing in a globally competitive economy and we need to take all measures possible so that we can create a fulfilling environment for our businesses—not only for today's businesses, but for tomorrow's businesses. Like the Minister of Transportation referred to his kids—a future that's bright for my two boys as well. That's exactly what we're trying to do here. The proposed changes support the Business Growth Initiative that is helping to grow the economy and create jobs by promoting an innovation-based economy, helping the small companies scale up and modernizing regulations for businesses.

I spoke earlier about the small businesses in my riding of Davenport and how important it is for them to not burden themselves with a lot of the red tape, a lot of the things that are often required of them to do their business day in and day out. We heard a member opposite speak earlier about one of their small businesses taking a full day to fulfill some of the paperwork and applications just to meet a certain regulation. We want to make sure that the small businesses are not spending their time doing that, but really spending on what they really need to do, which is continue to create the jobs and continue to grow our economy here in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to speak on behalf of the PC caucus this afternoon to respond to the Minister of Transportation. The minister, rightfully as the transportation minister, focused on the changes that impact his ministry. And in a 149-page legislation there are, oddly enough, some things that we in opposition can support.

But I think that I want to highlight one particular page—an issue—that relates to the Ministry of Energy. It's on page 110 for those of you who are following along. It mentions, "The disconnection of the supply of electricity to a consumer, including the manner in which and the time within which the disconnection takes place or is to take place, and with respect to a low-volume consumer"—that really means a residential customer—

"periods during which the disconnection may not take place."

Now, you might ask why we have to put in the Burden Reduction Act such a specific piece of amendment, such a tiny, little amendment directing the Ontario Energy Board. Well, to be frank, it's because we have far too many people in the province of Ontario who are being forced into energy arrears because of the cost of energy that has been imposed by this government.

So there are some good things in Bill 27. I will acknowledge that. In a 150-page document, I can highlight a few. But I think it's important to talk about why some of these specific things are in here, and it is directly related to how the current Liberal government is imposing issues on our energy costs.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Seeing it's 6 o'clock—oh, okay. I'm going to recognize the Minister of Transportation to wrap up.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Thanks very much, Speaker—very happy to have the chance to do the final wrap-up here. I want to thank the members from Sarnia, Timiskaming—Cochrane, Davenport and Dufferin—Caledon for their comments, questions and issues they raised.

I guess I would finish up, Speaker, only by saying that when it comes to legislation that's as crucial as Bill 27, not unlike so many other pieces of legislation that

emanate from this forward-looking, progressive, exciting, dynamic and enthusiastic government, as so many pieces of legislation do, I've got to remind the members of the opposition, as a fundamental thing in life that's important for everyone to remember: You shouldn't let the perfect be the enemy of the good. It's an important concept to remember.

I know the opposition has a job and a role to play, and it's a very important role to play here in this Legislature and beyond, and I respect that. I respect that as someone who respects all of the responsibilities that we have in this Legislature. I would say that there is so much in this legislation, in Bill 27, that is so crucial and fundamental to making sure that Ontario's economy continues to perform well, perform smoothly, perform efficiently, be prosperous, be productive, employ people, support families and ultimately support an exceptional quality of life that I would sincerely call on members, yes, to do their jobs but to remember that notion, not to let the perfect be the enemy of the good, and to find a way to not only support this legislation but to support our government's enlightened vision for a stronger economy for Ontario.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Seeing it is now 6 o'clock, I will be adjourning the House until Thursday, November 17 at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1801.





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